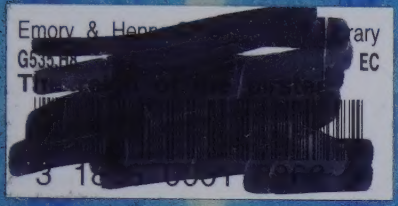
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THE REIGN OF THE PIRATES

(*Frontispiece*)

THE REIGN OF THE PIRATES

BY

ARCHIBALD HURD

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The Sea Traders," "The Triumph of the Tramp Ship," etc.

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

The pirate of fiction is a familiar figure; Marryat, Stevenson, Barrie and others have painted his portrait in bold colours, capturing the imagination of their readers, old as well as young. But the pirate of fact, as he existed in flesh and blood at a time when, though the maritime nations might be at peace with one another, the seas were unsafe for the merchant trader, is little known, though he was an even stranger figure than the pirate of fiction. He sometimes combined in his magnetic, if crude, personality some of the qualities of the saint and the sinner; as is revealed, in particular, in the record of the life and adventures of Captain Bonnet, the gentleman pirate. Though pirates ignored the law and not infrequently trampled upon the code of humanity, they were capable of loyalty towards one another, and on occasion could be merciful and generous to their victims.

In this volume an endeavour has been made to reconstruct a phase of the history of piracy which must make a special appeal to the peoples of the English-speaking races. It deals with pirates who came from English, Scotch and Welsh towns and villages, urged by many conflicting ambitions and necessities, and whose names became familiar along

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the shores of the North American Colonies and Plantations, among the islands of the West Indies, and even away in the Far East. An effort has been made to reconstitute the unique and little-known era of almost unchecked piracy towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, when a motley crowd of sea adventurers harried ocean traffic in these waters.

It was in the transitional period between the disappearance of the buccaneers and the gradual domination of the seas by the British Fleet (which was to lead at last to the suppression of slavery as well as piracy), that the more famous Anglo-Saxon pirates lived their brief lives of robbery and thrilling adventure; in following "the trade" they carried their lives in their hands with a fearless, and not unattractive, indifference to the penalty which might be exacted of them. However inevitable the condemnation of piracy, it represents a romance which loses nothing of its attractiveness when studied in the softened light which time sheds on the events of an epoch which filled contemporaries with indignation; they, quite naturally, failed to appreciate the romantic features of the careers of such lawless men and women—for there were women among these pirates.

In these pages the lives of twelve typical pirates are described against the contemporary political and social background. No little trouble has been taken to sift fact from fiction. The purpose has been to assemble a great deal of material hitherto buried in unfamiliar documents, official and other-

wise, and to lead upon the stage a varied group of sea-adventurers, whose thoughts and acts are set forth without malice, but also without mercy. The dust of history which has hitherto covered much of the humanity which these men and women exhibited in their fitful careers has been swept away. They are revealed as being very much like other human beings of their generation, but consumed with a lawless courage which knew no restraint and prompted them to deeds of daring and guile which, were proof not available, might be set down as figments of the novelist's imagination. These stories of "The Reign of the Pirates" also show how different were the social origins, characters, and adventures of the men and women, who, in varying circumstances, made promiscuous war upon merchants and sailors, and how unexpected, though not inexplicable, were the reactions ashore of their lawlessness in the peculiar economic conditions which then existed.

Whatever may be said upon moral grounds of piracy in general, the lives of those who followed its devious courses certainly did not lack the element of romance, and the stories of Mary Read and Ann Bonny, in particular, show how men and women, bound by ties of mutual affection, conspired together, with disdain for the consequences, to break the peace of the seas.

ARCHIBALD HURD.

January, 1925.

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THE REIGN OF THE PIRATES

CHAPTER I

HENRY MORGAN OF JAMAICA

To the great majority of English-speaking seamen the pirate's trade has always been abhorrent, especially in the strictest sense of the word that implies the indiscriminate robbery of merchantmen irrespective of treaties and nationality. Even when the conditions of their service have been of the roughest this has been conspicuously the case, and has probably been based upon the respect for law and order which has proved so constant a factor in Anglo-Saxon development. Nevertheless in a race of such origins and so wedded to the sea there were almost inevitably exceptions. And towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, a peculiar combination of circumstances produced for about fifty years a period that may appropriately be called, perhaps, the reign of the pirates.

This was due in the first place to the establishment in the New World of isolated but virile struggling communities; to the existing Navigation Acts that pressed very heavily upon them in favour of the merchant at home; and to their consequent

readiness to purchase cheap goods without asking inconvenient questions. It was also due to the existence of a vast number of scarcely settled islands; to long stretches of uninhabited coast-line; and to the throwing out of work at the end of, or between, the long wars with the Dutch, French and Spanish of seamen who had been trained in the exciting and often lucrative school of privateering. Moreover, in the West Indies, the Spanish Main, and along the Atlantic coast of North America, the law as administered at home and represented by the Navy was generally a long way off; while the ghosts of the Elizabethans, such as Drake and Hawkins, who had so often taken it into their own hands, were still lively examples upon the waters of which they had so forcibly made themselves the masters. But they had had a successor. And from Henry Morgan, born as he was out of due season, the reign of the pirates proper—though he would have indignantly denied the title—drew at least a good deal of its inspiration.

The son of a prosperous Welsh farmer of Llanrhymny, in Glamorganshire, Morgan was born somewhere about 1635, but if the boy is father to the man so was it with the future buccaneer, and at the age of fourteen he was wandering in the streets of Bristol, having run away from home in search of adventure. That was at the end of the civil war; and in the year that Charles I lost his head the young Morgan—or so it has been said—was kidnapped and sold as a slave, another legend maintaining that he deliberately indentured himself for service on the Barbados plantations.

It was, at any rate, in Barbados that he first set foot upon the soil of the New World, and in that island, no larger than the Isle of Wight, but for the best part of a century our most valuable overseas

possession, he seems to have served his full term and grown in due course to lusty manhood. There can be no doubt that in Barbados with its newly-introduced sugar industry and almost prodigally increasing wealth, Morgan could have found opportunities, and probably golden ones, for a successful mercantile career. But the roving blood, and as many would have said the black blood, was too strong in his veins, and a thousand miles away and twenty times larger, there was an island far more tempting to his tastes.

This was Jamaica, the "Island of Springs," captured from the Spaniards only a few years previously, a beautiful, lawless, and disease-stricken place and the resort of every kind of sea-adventurer. Here, when Morgan landed, there were a handful of English settlers, home-born or colonial-born—perhaps a couple of thousand in all —a few remaining Spaniards, soon to be expelled, and several thousand negro slaves, or maroons as they were called, most of whom had taken to the mountains on the disappearance of their Spanish masters. Round about Spanish Town and Port Royal a few plantations were already beginning to show signs of prosperity. But the greater part of the island, and especially the north of it, was still wholly unsettled, while its creeks and bays and the inns of Port Royal sheltered desperadoes of all nationalities. For a lad like Morgan it was therefore a place after his own heart, and it was not very long before he became a prominent figure in that strange fraternity known as the buccaneers or Brethren of the Coast.

Recruited from various nationalities this was a company or community, bound by its own laws and customs, and demanding, indeed, from its members a very high standard of courage and self-sacrifice.

Called buccaneers, from the French *boucaniers*, this was because of the habit, with which they were credited, of sustaining themselves very largely upon smoke-cured wild cattle meat, of which the native Indian name was *boucan;* and their chief resort was the little island of Tortuga, off the north-west coast of Hispaniola, now Haiti or St. Domingo. Here they dwelt, generally with a nominal governor, frequently a Frenchman, since the majority of the buccaneers were French; and with this for their headquarters they organized independent raids or sold their services as privateers to the highest bidders. Within their own ranks, however, they insisted on the most scrupulous loyalty and had even evolved a kind of mutual insurance scheme, compensation being paid to those who suffered loss of limb or other injury in the common cause. In spite of their cruelties, and the undoubted fact that most of them were actuated by motives of personal greed, there was still to be discerned in them a lingering strain of the half-fanatic mysticism of their Elizabethan forbears; and they had certainly attracted to their ranks many of the strongest and most daring characters in the West Atlantic of their time.

Such then was the community into which the Welsh farm boy and future knight had drifted, and it was one of very considerable, if wholly illegal, value to the early governors of Jamaica. For with the new-born colony regarded if not jealously, at any rate with disfavour, by the various neighbouring Spanish governors; with its nearest British comrade of any strength, in the shape of Barbados, a thousand miles away; and with the only British frigate recalled from Port Royal in the year 1660, it was no wonder that the governors of Jamaica should turn their eyes for support towards the buccaneers of Tortuga. Thus in 1665, when war broke out with

the Dutch, the then governor, Sir Thomas Modyford, at once issued letters of marque—licenses to act as privateers—to as many buccaneers as he could recruit; while in the same year another group, operating under letters of marque issued by a previous governor (and already, in fact, officially recalled) raided several coast towns in Spanish New Mexico, although Spain and England were nominally at peace.

Amongst these latter was Henry Morgan, adding fresh laurels to his growing reputation. Though he had probably been responsible, to a great extent, for ignoring the recall of the letters of marque, he found himself received, on his return to Jamaica, not only with cordiality but every deference. For in the dashing young captain of buccaneers Sir Thomas Modyford perceived just the man who might be most useful to him in a great many more ways than one. Far from censoring him, therefore—or, if he did, it was with a twinkle in his eye—the astute Modyford promptly offered him the post of vice-admiral against the Dutch.

The objective of the fleet that Modyford was fitting out was the Dutch island of Curaçao some six hundred miles to the south-east. A healthy and prosperous little island—rather like a chip of the veldt off the coast of South America—this was the last remaining of the Dutch West Indian islands, the others already having been captured; and accordingly in 1666, as second-in-command under Edward Mansvelt, another ex-buccaneer, Henry Morgan set sail from Jamaica on the first of his classic expeditions, with fifteen ships and six hundred men.

But to the buccaneers the island of Curaçao did not offer a particularly tempting prize. For though

it contained, as it still does, one of the sturdiest and healthiest of West Indian communities, it was not an island of outstanding wealth, while its Dutch inhabitants were no mean fighters. Moreover, the whole sentiment of Mansvelt's and Morgan's fleet was hereditarily and fundamentally anti-Spanish, and in view of the growing disapproval of the proposed objective they soon found it impossible to maintain discipline. The attack on Curaçao therefore never materialized, many of the buccaneers returning to Tortuga, while Mansvelt and Morgan decided with the remainder to attack the island of Providence or Santa Catarina. This latter island, which must not be confused with the later pirate headquarters of New Providence in the Bahamas, had been settled by the English in 1630, and being close to the Spanish Main had quickly developed into an exceedingly annoying thorn in the Spaniards' side. Spain had therefore attempted its capture in 1635 and successfully reoccupied it in 1641, and it was still in Spanish possession when Mansvelt and Morgan resolved to make their attack.

In this they were completely successful; the garrison quickly surrendered, Morgan greatly distinguishing himself by his personal prowess. All the island forts, with one exception, were razed to the ground, and the Spanish prisoners were afterwards landed on the shore of Costa Rica. A garrison of a hundred men was then left on the island, and it seems probable that in Mansvelt's mind there was an idea that it should become the centre of a new buccaneering republic. On his return to Jamaica, however, and after excusing himself for not taking Curaçao, he protested that his capture of Providence had merely been undertaken because he had felt himself unable to face Modyford without having achieved "some service for the

King." He then implored Modyford to strengthen the garrison, a request to which the Governor acceded, though merely as an interim measure while he wrote home for official instructions. Mansvelt then returned to Tortuga in order to enlist further recruits, but disappeared from the scene, either by death or capture, and Henry Morgan, his brilliant second-in-command, was left as the unchallenged and outstanding figure in the buccaneering world.

That was in 1667, the year of the Peace of Breda, which restored the *status quo ante* as between the English and the Dutch in respect of their West Indian colonies. But, in spite of a recent treaty with Spain, the hostility to the latter country had remained invincible, and in 1668, under pretext of a rumour that the Spaniards were contemplating the recapture of Jamaica, Modyford called Henry Morgan into his councils again and once more gave him a definite commission. This was to "draw together the English privateers and take prisoners of the Spanish Nation," and with ten ships and some five hundred men, Morgan presently set sail, under the official wing, ostensibly to collect information as to the Spaniards' alleged plan. Once at sea, however, he seems to have determined upon a course of action of a typically Elizabethan character, though he sought afterwards to invest it with a certain legal plausibility.

Thus being forced to land upon the south coast of Cuba, owing to a succession of severe storms, and running so dangerously short of provisions that he and his men were faced with starvation, he attempted to secure, as he claimed, in a legitimate way, fresh provisions for his fleet. The inhabitants, however—to whom Morgan's name had already become familiar—were so disobliging as to flee away; and he was consequently obliged, so he

said, to march across the island, where he found the town of Puerto Principa barred and manned against him. Here was yet another discourtesy, and he was therefore compelled, he reported, to enter and capture the city after a fierce resistance, finding ample evidence, he stated, of Spanish preparations for the conquest of Jamaica. Nevertheless he forbore to destroy the town, or to take prisoners, on consideration of the payment of a thousand beeves.

That was his own story, but according to a later account by the pseudonymous historian Esquemeling, the prisoners taken were only released after the most diabolical torture, while the booty extracted from them was equivalent in value to fifty thousand pieces of eight. This was too small a sum, however, adds Esquemeling—who, according to some accounts, was a surgeon in Morgan's employ—to pay the Jamaican debts of the buccaneers, and it was for this reason, he alleges, that Morgan next decided upon the daring plan of attacking the mainland town of Porto Bello.

Situated on the Isthmus of Panama, this was one of the most important towns in the whole of Spanish America, and for a fortnight in the year was the scene of the greatest market in the New World. For here the goods brought from home by the armed merchant fleet from Spain were exchanged for the stores of colonial produce that had been slowly accumulating in the large warehouses, of which the town chiefly consisted. Though more or less deserted during the rest of the year, owing to the dangers of the climate, it was therefore at all times likely to contain considerable wealth, and its attractions for Morgan can well be understood. But at the same time the sacking of such a town, even if its strong defences could be

overcome, was almost certain to be fraught with diplomatic consequences of the gravest order; and the large French contingent that had hitherto remained with Morgan flatly refused to have anything to do with so flamboyant a scheme. But Morgan, having made up his mind, was not to be deterred, and telling the Frenchmen they could do as they pleased, he held on with the remainder of the fleet, landing close to the town under the cover of darkness. He took it by surprise at three o'clock on the morning of 26th June, 1668, rushing two of the three forts that guarded the harbour, while the other quickly surrendered, and an hour or two later the town itself, with its four hundred families, was at the mercy of the buccaneers.

Mercy is hardly the word, perhaps, for there followed a scene of plunder accompanied by the wildest excesses, although it is only fair to state that Morgan himself disclaimed all responsibility for the worst of them. How far this can be accepted must be considered doubtful. Esquemeling describes Morgan as a man "little given to mercy"; and there are many contemporary accounts which picture him in the light of a fiend incarnate, albeit an outstandingly courageous one. At the same time it must be remembered that Morgan had many enemies, as indeed such a leader was bound to have, and that to retain control of such a force as his, an occasional degree of licence had doubtless to be permitted. Nor must it be forgotten that, to Morgan and most of his followers, Spain was still a byword for the most appalling cruelties, not only to the natives of their vast New World territories, but to their European prisoners, and especially the Protestant ones. To the buccaneers, therefore, a Spaniard, whether man, woman, or child, was still fair game for any sort of violence, and as they

rolled through the streets of the sweltering, sunlit town, or sat at nights in its shattered inns, drinking, they may well have seemed to the unfortunate Porto Bellans as devils let loose out of hell. In spite of their orgies, however, they retained enough skill and strength to beat off the rescue party sent by the President of Panama, and they eventually carried away with them, to spend in the Port Royal gambling dens, a hundred thousand pieces of eight by way of ransom.

It is interesting to recall, too, for the additional element of Elizabethan atmosphere that it lends to the adventure, a little incident recorded by Esquemeling of Morgan's occupation of the Spanish city. The President of Panama, he tells us, being moved by extreme astonishment and hardly less by admiration of Morgan's accomplishment in taking so strong a position with little more than a handful of men, sent him a messenger asking for a "small pattern of those Arms," wherewith the English buccaneer had been so successful. Morgan, Esquemeling adds, "received this messenger very kindly and treated him with great civility. Which being done, he gave him a Pistol and a few small Bullets of lead, to carry back unto the President his Master, telling him withal, He desired him to accept that slender pattern of the Arms wherewith he had taken Puerto Velo, and keep them for twelve months; after which time, he promised to come to Panama and fetch them away. The Governour of Panama returned the Present very soon unto Captain Morgan, giving him thanks for the favour of lending him such Weapons as he needed not, and withal sent him a Ring of Gold with this Message, That he desired him not to give himself the labour of coming to Panama as he had done to Puerto Velo, for he did certifie unto

him, he should not speed so well as he had done there."

As regards Modyford, however, any admiration that he might have shared with the Spanish governor was strictly chastened by the international consequences which he was shrewd enough to foresee and to fear; and in reporting home he took care both to emphasize the supposed Spanish threats to Jamaica and to make it clear that Morgan had exceeded his instructions and had been suitably reproved. Meanwhile an English frigate of some two hundred and forty tons, and carrying twenty-two guns and ninety-five men, had turned up at Port Royal with instructions to protect the colony and maintain order amongst the buccaneers, and Modyford decided to use it in prosecution of the forward policy against Spain in which he now saw his only hope of justification.

This included an early resuscitation of active measures on the assumption that hostilities on the part of Spain were on the verge of being launched, and consequently the English frigate, H.M.S. *Oxford*, sent out to over-awe Morgan and his companions, soon found herself included in a fleet under Morgan's actual command. This had been mobilized at the Isle de Vache, Morgan's private headquarters south of Hispaniola, but just before its departure in January, 1669, the *Oxford* was accidentally blown up. Many lives were lost, and it was regarded as a bad omen, but a couple of months later Morgan set sail with five hundred men, mostly French and English, for a raid upon the Spanish Main. Their first objective was the town of Maracaibo in the land-locked bay of the same name, but they found it deserted—and little wonder in view of what had happened at Porto Bello. The inhabitants had fled to the neighbouring town of

Gibraltar, and thither Morgan and his men at once pursued them, only to find that Gibraltar had also been largely deserted, and most of its valuables removed. For five weeks, however, they scoured the country, taking a few prisoners and endeavouring to extract information from them, and when they put to sea again, they found three Spanish men-of-war waiting for them. Two of these they destroyed with fire-ships and sank, and the other was captured and became Morgan's flagship. But on the whole, and though the booty secured amounted to almost as much as had been obtained from Porto Bello, the expedition was a disappointment, the individual shares, owing to the larger force employed, being considerably less.

Modyford meanwhile was not only himself in an exceedingly difficult position, but he had placed the ministers of Charles II, at home in England, in an even more delicate predicament. Reluctant to disown Modyford's and Morgan's achievements, and probably in their own hearts secretly approving of them, it was hard to produce grounds for them sufficiently plausible to satisfy an indignant Spanish ambassador. Modyford was therefore censured and seems to have made some efforts to keep his buccaneers in check, but in 1670, probably as the result of the Maracaibo and Gibraltar raids, retaliations began on the part of Spain that gave him a fresh justification for further adventures. Thus a Spanish sailor, a certain Captain Rivera, raided the north coast of Jamaica, leaving behind him a personal challenge to Morgan, while the Dutch governor of Curaçao, probably for diplomatic purposes of his own, sent Modyford a commission of reprisal that he had in some way got hold of, issued by the Spanish governor of Saint Jago de Cuba.

There was now much genuine alarm amongst

the English in Jamaica; arms were issued to the inhabitants; regular night watches were established at Port Royal; and Morgan, whose personal prestige was then at its highest point, was put in supreme charge of all available vessels, and given the title of admiral. In view, however, of a treaty with Spain which the English ambassador in Madrid was then endeavouring to negotiate, and of which Modyford had been informed, Morgan was ordered to be very circumspect in his actions; and he promised—how seriously may be guessed—that he would not attack any Spanish town unless he obtained satisfactory evidence that its inhabitants were preparing for hostilities against Jamaica. He then returned to his rendezvous at the little Isle de Vache to make what further preparations seemed good to him.

It cannot be honestly said that there were any material signs of a concerted enterprise against the island on the part of the Spaniards, although an engagement took place with the belligerent Captain Rivera, during which he was killed and his ship captured. But it must be admitted, for what it is worth, that Morgan's second-in-command returned from a reconnoitring expedition to the Spanish Main with tidings that at Porto Bello, Cartagena, and Panama, armies were being assembled for the conquest of Jamaica. According to another contemporary chronicler, however—one Richard Browne, who was also a surgeon attached to Morgan's fleet, but who was obviously animated, when he wrote, with extreme hostility towards his leader—these preparations were merely figments extracted by torture from various prisoners to furnish a plausible excuse for the treasure-hunt, upon which in reality Morgan was determined.

Whether this be the case or not, he sailed in

December with a force of some sixteen hundred men, and proceeded at first to the Isle of Providence, which had again been occupied by the Spaniards. Here the Spanish garrison quickly surrendered, and with Providence as his next base, Morgan sent a detachment of his men, under Captain Bradley, to take the fort at the mouth of the River Chagres, which commanded the approach to Panama on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus. After a bloody engagement in which the buccaneers engaged lost nearly half their men, the fort was captured, and a week later Morgan joined them with the remainder of his force. Leaving a garrison in the ruined fort, he then proceeded up the river with a party of about twelve hundred men, but after a few miles found navigation impossible and was obliged to proceed on foot.

That was on 10th January, 1671, and for the next nine days the buccaneers performed a march that in view of the hardships overcome, the climatic conditions encountered, and the desperate shortage of provisions from which they suffered, must certainly be regarded—apart from the morality of its purpose—as one of the most extraordinary on record. Ultimately, half starved—for Morgan had unwisely relied on being able to victual his force en route—savage and dishevelled, they arrived in sight of Panama and the Pacific on the tenth day after they had left Chagres. A Spanish force, said to have outnumbered them by two to one, and driving before it, according to several accounts, a herd of wild bulls, proved entirely unable to check the hungry buccaneers, and by three o'clock in the afternoon they had entered the city, albeit to find it in flames and the bulk of its treasure gone. That again was Morgan's account, but according to others it was the buccaneers themselves who set the

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SIR HENRY MORGAN.

town on fire, while it was afterwards stated that Morgan had grossly underestimated the spoils in order to line his own pockets. Indeed Richard Browne, after stating that the total booty amounted to some "seventy thousand pounds, besides other rich goods," complains that the soldiers were so cheated of their just shares that they only received ten pounds each.

In any case the expedition, for all the daring that went to it, could not, from any point of view, have been considered a triumph, and the return journey, in face of rough weather and a further shortage of provisions, added heavily to the casualties which had already been severe. Morgan, nevertheless, received a formal vote of thanks from the Council of Jamaica, and the general impression in England made by the news of his exploit can be gathered from the contemporary reference to it in Evelyn's Diary. Under the date of 19th August, 1671, he writes, "To Council. The letters of Sir Tho: Modiford were read, giving relation of the exploit of Panama, which was very brave; they tooke burnt and pillag'd ye towne of vast treasures, but the best of the booty had ben shipp'd off and lay at anchor in the South Sea, so that after our men had rang'd the country sixty miles about, they went back to Nombre de Dios, and embarq'd for Jamaica. Such an action had not ben done since the famous Drake."

Meanwhile, the treaty of peace to which reference has already been made had been concluded with Madrid, and contained provisions for the immediate cessation of reprisals and the recalling of all letters of marque and privateers. It was probably also associated with an understanding that Sir Thomas Modyford should be recalled, and he was afterwards committed for a while to the Tower for exceeding

his powers as a governor. It seems to have been a more or less formal imprisonment, however, for in 1674 Evelyn records discoursing with him at Lord Berkeley's, as well as with Morgan—now styled a colonel—"who undertook that gallant exploit from Nombre de Dios to Panama."

Indeed Morgan, who had also been sent for from the estate which he had now purchased for himself in Jamaica, was not only held to have been validly excused by the commission which he had received from Modyford, but was hailed in London society as in the rightful succession to Raleigh, Drake, and Hawkins, and probably to his own amazement and grim amusement found himself the darling of London drawing-rooms. Later he was knighted by Charles II, returning to Jamaica in 1675, where he settled down as a man of considerable wealth and a vigorous participator in local politics. He even acted on two occasions as Lieutenant-Governor of the island, while a month before his death in 1688, he was publicly eulogized in the Assembly in terms that described "his study and care" to be that there might be "no complaining in our streets, no man in his property injured, or of his liberties restrained."

For such a character this seems to suggest a not unremarkable change of habit, and in fact there were not lacking witnesses who attested to a somewhat different way of life. But after his return from England, Morgan seems to have become growingly sensitive to any aspersions upon his respectability; and on the first appearance of "Esquemeling's History," in which he himself was referred to as a pirate, he sued the English printers of the book for defamation and succeeded in obtaining substantial damages. So died in 1688 the greatest of the Stuart adventurers and one who may

fairly be described as the last of the buccaneers, just as the sacking of Panama, with its displays of courage and cruelty and its subsequent quarrels, charges and counter-charges, may be called the swan-song—at any rate as far as England was concerned—of the lawless Brethren of the Coast.

CHAPTER II

JOHN AVERY AND THE GREAT MOGUL

VARIOUSLY known as the "Successful Pirate," "The King of the Pirates," and "The King of Madagascar," it has been given to few English pirates to obtain such a contemporary reputation, or to achieve so lasting a notoriety, as Captain John Avery, Evory, or Every, as he has sometimes been called. It is all the more surprising, therefore, when one comes to investigate his history, to discover how little is really known of him, both his origin and fate being largely legendary and incapable of verification. Indeed, although he was the inspirer of poems, plays, and novels, it was only for a few months that he actually took the stage of history, emerging from and retreating into an obscurity, in which it is no easy matter to discern fact from fiction. That in 1695 he captured amongst others an important vessel belonging to the Great Mogul; that he thereby not only provoked the greatest monarch in Asia, but the most powerful corporation in England and was very nearly the cause of renewing a disastrous war between the two; that a reward of £500 was offered for his capture by the British government at the instance of the East India Company; that various alleged members of his crew were subsequently taken and hanged; and that a naval officer, nearly thirty years later, found the remains of his fortifications in Madagascar—this is

about all that can be recorded of him with undoubted certainty.

Indeed, like Sir Henry Morgan, the last of the buccaneers, it might even be claimed for him that, in the strictest sense of the word, he was not a pirate at all. For apart from the original capture of the vessel, in which he sailed to the East—itself according to some accounts a vessel in the employment of Spain—and his probable association with comrades, who may very possibly have been less scrupulous, there is no definite record of his seizing ships belonging to his own countrymen, although he undoubtedly preyed upon merchantmen belonging to countries with which his own was at peace. He seems, at any rate, to have been a less despicable figure than many of his successors in the early eighteenth century, men like the notorious Teach or "Blackbeard," who robbed and slaughtered indiscriminately; and although he did not operate on the grand scale of Morgan and the buccaneers of Jamaica and Tortuga, it may plausibly be argued that he was rather of their school than of that of those later ruffians of the sea. At the same time it must be admitted, after the various scantily documented and sometimes conflicting accounts of him have been duly weighed, that he emerges as a somewhat less heroic and grandiose figure than that which so captured the imagination of his decade.

The year of his birth is unknown, but it seems fairly certain that he was a West Countryman; that he was born and brought up in the neighbourhood of Plymouth; and that he was intended from his earliest days for a career at sea. He was thus probably familiar as a boy with the semi-legal exploits of Morgan, and may well, indeed, have been in England when the latter was recalled from Jamaica, after the sack of Panama, to become the

hero of the Court and London society. After serving his apprenticeship, he was in due course promoted to the position of mate, in which capacity, we are told, he was employed in several trading voyages, and it was during these, no doubt, that he obtained the wide experience, both of the West and East Indies, that proved of such service to him.

It was, at any rate, to the West Indies, to the little island of New Providence in the Bahamas, later to acquire such ill-fame as a pirate centre, that he eventually repaired after his depredations had set the whole of the East ringing with his name, while according to some accounts, it was from a port in the West Indies that he originally set out on his historic expedition. A more detailed account, however, for which exactness is claimed, describes his first entrance into piracy as follows. Owing to the large amount of smuggling and illicit trading which was being carried on in West Indian waters between the French island of Martinique and the mainland coast of Spanish America, the Spanish patrol vessels were proving inadequate, and the Spanish authorities decided to supplement them. For this purpose they made arrangements for the hiring of a couple of ships from Bristol, each mounting some thirty guns and carrying one hundred and twenty men. Whether these vessels were eventually to be commanded by Spanish officers we are not told, but though the whole story must be considered very doubtful, it must be borne in mind that at this time England and Spain were in a brief alliance with the Dutch against France. In any case the vessels sailed, we are assured—or at any rate one of them —from Bristol to Corunna in Spain, John Avery being the first mate under a captain whose name was Gibson.

At Corunna Gibson was to wait for orders, and

it was while his vessel was still in harbour that Avery first conceived the idea of seizing it for his own purposes. The captain, who was apparently a *bon vivant*, being for a considerable portion of his time either in his cups or recovering from them, Avery succeeded, unknown to him, in winning over to his ideas the majority of the crew. A suitable moment was then agreed upon, and while the captain was asleep in his cabin, Avery got the vessel under weigh and headed her for the open sea. By the time that he had become fully aware of the situation, the captain was helpless to alter the course of affairs, and had to submit to the choice of joining the pirates or leaving the vessel in one of the boats. He chose the latter, and with a handful of men succeeded in making his way back to port, but was unable to achieve the recapture of his vessel, with which Avery was now proposing to operate in the Indian Ocean.

According, however, to later investigations on the part of the East India Company, by the time Avery was actually at work, his ship—by then named the *Fanny*—mounted forty-six guns and carried a crew of one hundred and thirty; and it may well have been the case, therefore, that before rounding the Cape of Good Hope, Avery visited one of the West Indian islands, where he would have had no great difficulty in recruiting all the hands he wanted and obtaining the additional armament required. On the other hand, either by tact or force, he might equally well, in all probability, have fitted himself out at one or other of the European trading stations on the west coast of Africa; and he may also have found reinforcements in the island of Madagascar—an island that was to play in the East much the same part as New Providence in the Bahamas was to do in the West. Whatever may have been his move-

ments, however, prior to rounding the Cape, it is clear that he made a base of Madagascar, of which, in the piratical sense, he afterwards came to be considered somewhat as the founder of a dynasty.

Nor is it difficult to understand why this island —the third largest in the world—should have seemed, and indeed proved, to be so appropriate a base for attack upon the immensely valuable sea-commerce of the Indian Ocean. It was some 900 miles long, with an average breadth of 250 miles, lying parallel with, and at its nearest point 260 miles distant from the south-east coast of Africa. It was admirably placed for raids both upon the northern and southern trade-routes of the Indian Ocean. Moreover, on both coasts it contained numerous harbours of which the comparatively small vessels of the pirates could take full advantage, many of those on the west being sheltered by precipitous cliffs, while upon the east most of the river entrances were protected by reefs or sand-banks. Further, there was no strong and centralized government in the island; its territory was divided amongst a large number of relatively weak tribes and rulers; while the few brief attempts at permanent European colonization had always hitherto proved disastrous. Thus a tentative English plantation had been begun during the reign of Charles I, in 1645, the site chosen being in the neighbourhood of St. Augustine's Bay, in the extreme south of the island. Of the original hundred and forty colonists, however, only twenty-three were surviving at the end of a year, and of these less than twelve had succeeded in returning to England alive. Twenty-six years later, the East India Company had tried to revive the idea of an English colony, but on this occasion the natives had proved too hostile to make its prosecution worth while. The Dutch also had

tried to form settlements, but had met with no better fortune, while one or two military posts established by the French had had their garrisons destroyed by disease or massacre.

Such then was the island in which Avery succeeded in establishing himself, and it seems fairly certain that the position chosen by him was either upon St. Mary's Island or the coast opposite to it, some 250 miles south of the northernmost point of Madagascar, and on its eastern side. Here, according to one account, he found some white men, members of the crews of a couple of sloops that they had stolen from the West Indies. On first seeing Avery's vessel they assumed it to be a frigate, probably in chase of themselves, and accordingly took to the woods, as a precaution, before Avery's landing-party reached the shore. When it became clear to them, however, that the latter were also sailing under the Black Flag, an alliance was formed between the two parties, with Avery in command of the whole. It was therefore in company with these other two sloops, if this account is to be believed, that Avery next sailed north towards the mouth of the Red Sea, where he intended to begin operating in earnest.

Here he looked about for a suitable strategic anchorage, and decided to make use of the little island of Perim, now familiar on account of its lighthouse to all passengers between the Suez Canal and Aden. Situated some ninety-six miles from the latter port and commanding the entrance to the Red Sea, it was in 1695 an unoccupied island. It was three and a half miles long by a mile and a half broad, and admirably placed from the point of view of raids on one of the wealthiest streams of Arabian and Indian commerce. It was also provided with a harbour adequate to Avery's purposes, and here,

according to one authority, he began to build actual fortifications, although the lack of fresh water ultimately led to its abandonment as a permanent base for piratical operations. Here for some time, however, he appears to have maintained himself, and presently news began to filter back to the chief ports of the Indian Ocean that vessels were being held up and plundered by a pirate vessel, heavily armed, and of unknown nationality. Then there came definite tidings to the town of Surat, where the East India Company had one of its most important stations, that the pirate was an Englishman and that he had just captured a vessel of a prominent Surat merchant, one Abdul Gophor.

This naturally aroused intense local indignation, which rose to such heights that the Governor of Surat, who was a friend of the Company, was obliged, in their own interests, to place its representatives under military guard. But from the Company's point of view worse news was to follow, for soon afterwards a vessel returned to Bombay, robbed of money and jewels to an estimated value of no less than £300,000. Moreover, this vessel, which belonged to the Great Mogul, had been laden with pilgrims for Mecca; while the bulk of the plunder consisted of their private effects, money that they were carrying with them to pay for their transport on land, personal adornments and offerings that had been intended for the Holy Places. Not only was this outrage regarded, therefore, as a direct affront to the Mogul, Aurungzebe—perhaps the greatest of this illustrious line of emperors—but as an act of sacrilege which flouted the most sacred beliefs of the whole Mohammedan world. So fierce, indeed, were the passions awakened that both at Surat and the minor station of Swally, all the English residents, including the East India

Company's president, had to be placed in irons to save them from the fury of the populace.

Nor could these tidings have come at a more unpropitious moment for the East India Company, which, in spite of its strength in India and in England and its enormous prestige in both countries, had every reason, at this particular time, to avoid any provocation of the Great Mogul. In order to appreciate fully, however, the predicament in which Avery had placed the Company, and of which, a few years later, as we shall see, the famous Captain Kidd was to pay a part of the price, it is necessary to go back a little and consider the Company's position at this somewhat critical phase of its history.

Founded in 1600, it had been the outcome of a series of factors that during the previous twenty or thirty years had succeeded in directing the attention of English merchants to the enormous trading possibilities of the East Indies. Of these factors the most outstanding had been the capture by Drake in 1587 of a Portuguese treasure-ship from these waters that was not only in itself one of the richest single prizes that had ever been brought into an English harbour, but that had contained records of previous trading that were even still more amazing. That had been followed in 1591 by the report of one of the Levant Company's agents, Ralph Fitch, after an eight years' journey through India, Burma, and the Malay Peninsula, fully confirming the possibilities disclosed, and the return, three years later, of Captain James Lancaster, an Armada veteran, with further exact and most valuable knowledge. A Company had accordingly been formed, consisting of a hundred merchants, with an initial capital of £30,000, to whom a charter was granted by Queen Elizabeth and later confirmed by James I.

This charter gave the Company a monopoly of the "whole, entire, and only trade and traffic to the East Indies," and in spite of various set-backs and the fierce competition both of the Portuguese, and later of the Dutch, the Company, well served both by its servants and governors, went from strength to strength. Indeed the temporary advantage that the Dutch at one time seemed to have gained in respect of the supposedly more valuable island trade, by driving the Company to turn its attention to the mainland of India, was soon to prove an event of almost incalculable value to it. Thus by 1669 it was regularly employing some thirty vessels and three thousand sailors, was supplying England with such articles as saltpetre, indigo, pepper, calicoes and drugs to an annual value of £180,000 and was bringing home goods for re-export to almost treble this amount. Ten years later the goods brought back to England had grown to an annual value of over £1,000,000, while between the years 1680 and 1690, the average dividend paid by the Company ranged from 30 to 40 per cent., and its original £100 shares rose to a value of £500.

But by this time its very success had begun to create difficulties that were causing the Governor and directors very considerable anxiety. Thus at home in England its monopoly, derived, not from Parliament, but from the Crown, was giving rise to an increasing body of criticism from less fortunate and excluded merchants, and a new and rival company was already in embryo and pressing for its right to share in the Indian trade. Moreover, well served as the Company had been in the East, and thoroughly as it was now established in such centres as Surat, Bombay, and Masulipatam, its relation with the autocratic and immensely powerful Aurungzebe, with his ingrained contempt for even the best

type of European, had by no means been a matter of plain sailing, and had recently led, indeed, to actual hostilities. Nor had these been very satisfactory to the East India Company, and only five years before Avery's sensational exploit, it had been obliged to conclude a peace with the Great Mogul under conditions that could scarcely have been described as triumphant. Later it was to survive its troubles, including the inexperienced competition of the new opposing company, and in its English governor, Sir Josiah Child, connected as he was with half the most influential families in England, the Company had at its disposal one of the shrewdest, most tenacious, and far-sighted of contemporary English minds. But just at the moment it was in troubled waters, both in England and the East, while the competing Dutch and Portuguese merchants, were of course only too ready to turn its least misfortune to instant account.

Such was the position when Avery captured the Mogul's vessel—a capture that gave rise to the popular legend that he had also seized and abducted the Great Mogul's daughter and carried her off with him to Madagascar. This was almost certainly baseless. But it was to Madagascar that he returned with his treasure, and it was at this stage of his career, that, according to some accounts, he built the fort or castle associated with his name. According to another report, however—and here for a few months his history again becomes somewhat vague—he decided, while on his way back to Madagascar, to give the slip to his two companion sloops. Each of these had been laden with a share of the common plunder, however, which Avery was unwilling to forego, and he accordingly summoned a council to which he invited the masters of the two sloops. To these he represented that in case of attack or heavy

weather his own larger and better armed vessel would be a safer repository for the chests that they had on board, and he succeeded in persuading them to let him have charge of these, under duplicated seals, until such times as their contents could be safely distributed. He then took his own crew into his confidence, promising them a share of this added loot, and under cover of darkness, left the sloops in the lurch and made his way back to the West Indies.

Whether this story be true or not, it is practically certain that he did eventually reach the island of New Providence, where he disposed of his ship under the pretence that she had been an unlucky privateer. He forthwith disbanded his crew, afterwards described by the East India Company as consisting of some fifty-two French, the rest being Dutch, English, Scottish, and Irish. He then purchased a smaller ship with which, under another name, he reached New England.

Meanwhile, the East India Company, thoroughly stirred by the damage that it had suffered on account of this obscure pirate, had brought the whole of its influence to bear both in England and in India to counteract the results of his outrages and to have him brought to justice. Thus Sir John Gayer, its representative at Bombay, had immediately disowned both to the Governor at Surat and the Great Mogul any complicity in the attacks, and had further offered to convey pilgrims in two armed ships of the Company's own. He had also sent vessels in search of the pirate, while the court of directors at home in England had presented a memorial to the Lords Justices, who offered a reward of £500 for Avery's capture, to which the Company added another 4,000 rupees.

In spite of these measures, however, Avery himself was never taken, though two of his alleged crew

were reported to have been seized in Ireland, another at Rochester, and others later, of whom five were executed. Further members of his company, too, are described as accepting the general pardon to pirates proclaimed by William III at the end of 1698. Since from this pardon, Avery and his successor Kidd were expressly excluded by name, it may be deduced that, at that date at any rate, Avery was still at large if he were alive. But his further adventures are again veiled in such obscurity that it is almost impossible to disentangle the truth from the legends that accumulated about his name. According to an account, however, that was very generally accepted, he made his way back to Ireland, owing to the difficulty that he had found in New England of negotiating the sale of his plunder, which was largely in the shape of diamonds and other precious stones. Here he sold his sloop and presently returned to Devonshire, where he lived for some time in retreat at Bideford, later making tentative efforts to dispose of his jewels by means of intermediaries at Bristol. These, it was alleged, having discovered the truth concerning his identity, ruthlessly robbed and blackmailed him, only allowing him a pittance upon which to live as long as there seemed any possibility of his producing more treasure. Ultimately, after another visit to Ireland, he is stated to have returned again to Devonshire, where he died in Bideford in circumstances of absolute penury.

As for his companions in the Indian Ocean, to whom he was alleged to have given the slip, these returned, we are told, to Madagascar, where they either formed a new colony, intermarrying with the natives, with whom they were soon on friendly terms, or throwing in their lot with some other group or groups of European pirates already established upon

this island. For though Avery, among other things, incurred the reputation of sponsoring Madagascar as a haunt for pirates, it is probable that for many years it had been used as a convenient hiding-place by less renowned and discreeter freebooters. It was chiefly owing to Avery, however, in the first place, and to Kidd in the second, that the island from now onwards, for several decades, possessed an increasingly evil reputation and attracted to itself, at some time or another, every pirate of note in Eastern waters.

CHAPTER III

CAPTAIN KIDD

MANY English pirates have survived as more or less legendary figures, or disguised as characters in works of fiction. But the name most familiar, and the one that, when pirates are mentioned, rises most readily to the lips, is undoubtedly that of Captain Kidd, whose trial at the Old Bailey has since been so severely criticized on the score of injustice. Moreover, his association directly with the Earl of Bellamont, the Governor of New England in his day, and indirectly with such great figures as Lord Somers, the Lord Chancellor of England, lifted his actions into a sphere of high politics and contending interests that not only lent them enormous notoriety, but gave rise to suspicions—probably not altogether ill-founded—that he was considerably more sinned against than sinning.

Indeed he has not lacked apologists who have since held him up as a simple, loyal and conscientious sea-captain, who was deliberately sacrificed upon the gallows for the convenience of his superiors. Nor can it be denied, in so far as judgment is possible from a study of the contemporary reports of his trial, that he seems to have been handicapped, whether designedly or not, in every possible way, or that the court was determined, if it could anyhow be done, to secure a conviction that would make an example of him. There are so

many gaps, however, in the evidence on both sides that this elderly seaman—for he was nearing sixty—will probably continue to swing from his metaphorical gallows as equally symbolic of British piracy and the cynicism, corruption, and immorality of politics in the early eighteenth century.

Born at Greenock, about 1644, William Kidd seems first to have made his mark in the New World as a successful privateer captain in the West Indies during the Anglo-French wars of 1689 onwards, and to have accumulated a certain amount of property, if not actual wealth, both by this means and as a merchant captain. He also seems to have made a name for himself in New England politics, notably during the troubled régime that coincided in New York with the deposition of James II and the accession of William III, and to have been voted a sum of £150 by the government of the Province in recognition of his services. There appears to have been a proposal, too, in the year 1691, on the part of the authorities in Massachusetts, to utilize his services, as an experienced and trustworthy sailor, in the suppression of the local piracy that was already beginning to assert itself; and he is traditionally believed, with his wife Sarah, to have occupied a comfortable house in Cedar Street in the New York of that day. He was at any rate in London in the year 1695, in the capacity of master of a trading vessel, being then a man of over fifty and of some means and position, as his various apologists have pointed out. With him in London, too, was another prominent New England citizen, one Robert Livingston or Levingston, a man who had held the positions of Town Clerk and Secretary for Indian Affairs, and was either already acquainted with, or desirous of commending himself to, the new Governor-designate of New England.

This was Richard Coote, first Earl of Bellamont, an Irish peer who was still in England, but who had the year previously received the appointment of Governor of New England, with a special mission to suppress piracy. This was probably as a direct result of the depredations of Avery and his associates in the Indian Ocean, who were believed to have fitted themselves out either in the West Indies or in the New England provinces, and whose outrages had resulted, as we have already seen, in the imprisonment at Surat of a number of Englishmen in the employment of the East India Company. Faced in the East, therefore, with the anger of the Great Mogul at a time when it could ill-afford the latter's enmity, and being pressed at home by rival mercantile combinations, who were actively challenging its Far Eastern monopoly, the great Company was using all its influence to secure the suppression of a traffic which threatened to cause it serious damage. Bellamont had accordingly received orders to do all that he could to destroy any sources of piracy in maritime New England, and in an unfortunate moment for Kidd, Livingston introduced him to the earl as a suitable agent for the task.

After a meeting in London, Bellamont seems to have approved of Kidd, and the next consideration was the manner in which the best use of him could be made. Apparently Bellamont's first idea was to obtain for him a definite naval command, a proposal which was rejected by the Admiralty as irregular, but in December, 1695, Kidd was given an official letter of marque as a privateer against France, with whom England was still at war, and a special commission in addition to seek and apprehend pirates. But that was not all, for there was now drawn up the agreement that was afterwards

to become the subject of so much controversy, and that, justifiable or not, throws a curious light on the contemporary ethics of the higher official life of the time.

Briefly this agreement was that the necessary capital involved in fitting out Kidd's vessel—an amount of some £6,000—was to be provided and awarded as follows: Livingston and Kidd were to be responsible for the ship, while Bellamont, who was to obtain the necessary authorities for the expedition, guaranteed the remainder, a liability that he shared with Lord Somers, the then Lord Chancellor, Lord Orford, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Romney, one of the Secretaries of State, the Duke of Shrewsbury, one of the Lords Justices, and probably one or two others. Of all the treasures taken both from French merchantmen and from the captured pirates—the latter being subject to a deduction of one-tenth payable to the Crown—one-quarter was to be divided amongst the crew, who were to have no other payment, the remaining three-quarters being divided into five equal parts, of which the Earl of Bellamont and his associates were to receive four, the remaining share being divided between Livingston and Kidd.

It was further stipulated that if the total taken did not recompense Lord Bellamont for what he had advanced, Livingston and Kidd were to make themselves responsible for reimbursing him, and that, on the other hand, if the total amount brought home equalled or exceeded a value of £100,000, the vessel itself was to become the sole property of Livingston and Kidd in recognition of their services. It will thus be seen that, laudable as were its objects, and though it sailed under the official sanction of the Lord Chancellor's Great Seal, the expedition was also an enterprise out of which its participators

stood to receive very handsome financial advantages; while the terms of agreement between the parties offered every instigation to Captain Kidd and his crew to take all precautions—pirates or no pirates—against returning empty-handed.

It was under these circumstances, then, that in May, 1696, Captain Kidd put out from Plymouth in a 30-gun vessel, the *Adventure Galley*, with New York for his first destination. Here he was to augment his crew, presumably with picked men —or, according to his supporters, with the best that he could find in order to replace losses that he had suffered owing to the press-gang in England—and there he arrived safely in July, together with a French prize that he had taken near Newfoundland under his letter of marque. Eventually, with a crew of about a hundred and fifty, he sailed from New York in September, 1696, touched at Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands, and on 12th December, fell in with a squadron of English men-of-war under Captain Warren. With these he sailed in company for about a week, and arrived in Madagascar early in February, 1697.

So far there is but little difference in the various accounts that were afterwards given of his proceedings. But from now onwards it is only possible to record with certainty the main events of his expedition, since in essential details, as is only to be expected, Kidd's own version and that of his apologists differ materially from that of his accusers and the accounts afterwards circulated in defence of his patrons. It seems quite clear, however, that he did not find, and indeed did not apparently search very seriously for pirates in Madagascar, but soon put to sea again, arriving some time in March at the little island of Johanna in the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and what is now

Portuguese East Africa. Here, he tells us, he found several outward-bound East Indiamen, and remained in company with them for five days taking in supplies of water. From thence he sailed to another island, Mehila, some thirty miles distant, where he landed owing to an epidemic on board, from which he lost a large number of his men, and took the opportunity to careen and clean his vessel. But the various accounts are somewhat conflicting, and it is possible that a short cruise or two intervened, and that he had already touched at this island once or twice, before his increasing casualties demanded this particular landing. But it is at any rate fairly clear that up to this time—more than a year since he had left Plymouth—his captures had been negligible from the commercial standpoint, if indeed he had effected any since leaving New York, and it is also evident that it was during the summer of 1697 that he resolved to take up his station in the region where Avery, a couple of years previously, had first begun to terrorize Indian shipping.

This was at the mouth of the Red Sea, and it can, of course, be urged in Kidd's favour that he had reason to believe it a likely situation for the prosecution of his quest. It was afterwards stated, however, by Joseph Palmer, one of the two members of his crew who gave evidence against him at his trial, that Kidd's expressed intention was to waylay and rob the Mecca fleet that was expected to pass within the next few weeks. Whatever were his motives, his sojourn proved fruitless, for though the fleet passed about the middle of August, it was one of considerable strength, and opened fire upon Kidd and he secured neither prize nor plunder.

It was now nearly eighteen months since he had started upon his journey; according to every account

nothing material had been achieved; and it can well be understood that his crew who were dependent upon their takings for their reward, and had already been seriously reduced by disease and death, may have begun to turn their thoughts to more violent measures. That they in fact did so was Kidd's later contention, and in all that followed till he set out for home, Kidd represented himself as being rather their helpless instrument than the pirate-hunter turned pirate that he was popularly supposed to be. However that may be, the unfortunate *Adventure Galley* was turned once more towards the Malabar coast, and fell in en route with a small Indian-owned merchantman, from which, lawfully or otherwise, she took some goods. Her next recorded experience was an attack by a Portuguese man-of-war, who probably, rightly or wrongly, took her to be a pirate, and in a brisk engagement, lasting for four or five hours, Kidd had ten of his men wounded. He then reached the Malabar coast or one of the islands in its neighbourhood, and it was afterwards alleged that he landed here, and after provisioning and watering his vessel, plundered the local natives and had one of them shot—in defence of which it was urged that the native had previously cut the throat of a member of his crew.

To everyone on board it must now have been quite clear that, unless there were a very prompt change of fortune, the whole venture, with its titled and powerful patrons, was heading for an ignominious and complete disaster. And this must evidently have been the position when, about the middle of October, Kidd and his men came in touch with a Dutch vessel, the *Loyal Captain*. That there was some intercourse with this vessel is clear, and it is also clear that there was a

question of seizing her, Kidd alleging that certain members of his crew were definitely mutinous because he refused to do so. There was at any rate a dispute, although the vessel was not taken, and it was evident that the crew was by this time thoroughly disaffected, the feeling on board coming to a crisis, some twelve or fourteen days later, in a definite quarrel between Kidd and his gunner, Moore.

According to Kidd's apologists, this man was insubordinate and one of the ringleaders of the piratical party, while according to Joseph Palmer, he was quietly "grinding a chisel," on the day in question. Angry and disappointed, according to Palmer, Kidd was pacing the deck when he reproached the innocent Moore for not having put him in the way of taking the *Loyal Captain*, Moore having presumably concealed something, in Kidd's opinion, that would have made this possible. Kidd then called him a "lousy dog," whereupon the gunner replied, "If I am a lousy dog, you have made me so; you have brought me to ruin and many more." On this Kidd snatched up a bucket, "a certain wooden bucket, bound with iron hoops, of the value of eightpence," and struck Moore a blow on the head—a fact that Kidd admitted—the gunner dying the next day. Kidd afterwards tried to establish in court that Moore was already a sick man, but it seems fairly clear that his death was due to the blow; and in spite of the provocation that Kidd alleged as an excuse, and his denial of the intention to kill, he was duly found guilty of the act of murder before his trial for piracy was proceeded with.

That was in October, 1697, and whatever may have been the real circumstances in which the gunner was killed, the unhappy ship cannot but

have suffered still further as a result of the feelings aroused by his death. Moreover, after eighteen months' knocking about, she was beginning to leak badly, and whether she was a pirate or still a policeman-privateer, there could have been few less enviable vessels, in that particular October, than Captain Kidd's *Adventure Galley*. Such then was her position when, in the following month, she fell in with a small merchantman of some two hundred tons, bound from Surat to the Malabar coast, and carrying a couple of horses, a cargo of sugar and cotton, a crew of forty natives, and three white men, the latter being Dutch and acting in the capacities of pilot, boatswain and gunner. This vessel Kidd captured, legitimately as he maintained, since she carried a French pass, which he afterwards brought home with him; the natives were put ashore in the vessel's long-boat, and the three white men joined Kidd. Kidd then sold the goods locally, but retained the vessel, owing to the increasing unseaworthiness of the *Adventure Galley*. He headed once more for Madagascar, and it was on his way there, in February, 1698, that he took his only recorded prize of any substantial value, a six hundred ton vessel, the *Quedagh Merchant*.

This was an Armenian-owned merchantman, plying between Surat and Bengal, and belonging to one Cogi Baba, a merchant of Chulfa, and was carrying at the time of her capture a cargo valued by the owner at some 400,000 rupees. For purposes, as he later admitted, of decoying her, Kidd approached her under a French flag, and then made her a prize, also under his letter of marque, as he said, since she too carried a French pass. Whether this pass was genuine or carried by the *Quedagh Merchant* as a sort of Oriental insurance,

is not clear, but the first negotiator who came on board the *Adventure Galley*, and whom Kidd assumed to have been the master, was a Frenchman, although it was afterwards alleged that the real master, not discovered till some days later, was an Englishman of the name of Wright. In any case the *Quedagh Merchant* was retained, and it is difficult to suppose that, whatever were her credentials and Kidd's own attitude towards her, he would have found it an easy matter, considering the temper of his crew, to have let so valuable a capture go.

Fortified with a second French pass, therefore, he refused an offer of ransom, stated to have amounted to 50,000 rupees, and subsequently sold goods out of her to an alleged amount—probably greatly exaggerated—of ten to twelve thousand pounds. He then took her into company with him and his other smaller prize, and once more proceeded towards Madagascar, the *Adventure Galley* being now so leaky that, according to his own account, it took eight men every two hours to keep her free. Who was now in effective charge of the expedition becomes increasingly uncertain, but in April, 1698, a Portuguese ship was encountered, bound from Bengal to Goa with a cargo of muslins, calicoes, and other goods. This, too, was plundered to a certain extent, either with or without Kidd's connivance, but on seeing several other vessels approaching, she was hastily left, and the *Adventure Galley* and her two consorts continued on their way to Madagascar.

Here, in spite of her alleged condition, the *Adventure Galley* seems to have arrived considerably in advance of the *Quedagh Merchant*, the landing-place chosen being St. Mary's Island on the east coast, and therefore either the same that

Avery had previously made use of, or in its immediate neighbourhood. It was at any rate already occupied, when Kidd crept into the harbour, by a jovial and successful crew of pirates under one Captain Culliford, who had seized for his own purposes an East India merchantman, in which he had been an officer. Culliford was one of the very people, therefore, that Kidd had been sent to capture, though it can well be understood that the sight was not a welcome one, and that, even if he had desired to take Culliford, he would have found it a difficult matter with the men and means at his disposal. What eventually happened, in fact, was a definite fraternization, with Kidd either a willing or unwilling party, and a long sojourn in the island that coincided with rapid developments in respect of Kidd at home.

For the East India Company had now reported to England that Captain Kidd had himself become a pirate, and with Avery still at large, the great Company was pressing with redoubled energy for an immediate and definite anti-pirate policy. As was to happen later in 1717-18, so now this was to be inaugurated, it was decided, by the promulgation of a general pardon—probably in consideration of the fact that most of the pirates had served an apprenticeship in privateers, in which they had done valuable service for their country. All pirates who came in, therefore, and laid down their arms in the presence of a competent authority, taking the oath of allegiance and giving a formal undertaking to forswear their bad ways, were to be allowed to go free under the terms of the pardon, Avery and Kidd being alone excepted. At the same time it was obviously desirable, for the purposes of placating the Great Mogul, that some definite personal example should, if possible, be

made, and steps were accordingly taken to secure the arrest of Kidd, Bellamont being ordered to apprehend him if he should return to New England.

The former hunter of pirates, although still unaware of it himself, had thus had his name proclaimed all round the world, and questions were already being asked at home about the auspices and conditions under which the *Adventure Galley* had set out upon its voyage. Later these were even pressed, for political purposes, as far as the House of Commons itself, Lord Somers being openly accused by his enemies of vicarious piracy, owing to his association with Kidd's commission. It is thus obvious that, whether Kidd were guilty or not, there were enormously powerful interests arrayed to ensure that he was caught and condemned, and equally clear that a pardon, even if justice demanded it, would inevitably be misinterpreted both at home and abroad.

It was under a dark enough sky then, so far as his own future was concerned, that early in 1699 Kidd left Madagascar, not in the *Adventure Galley*, which, as he afterwards said, was far too untrustworthy for further sea-going, but in the *Quedagh Merchant*, with such members of his crew as, according to his own description, remained loyal to him. In this, after a successful passage, he arrived at the little island of Anguilla, in the West Indies, where in April, 1699, exactly three years since he had sailed from Plymouth, he learned that he had been proclaimed a pirate. He then made his way to the island of St. Thomas, where many of his men deserted him—wisely enough, as events turned out—and from thence he took the *Quedagh Merchant* to the little island of Mona, between the islands of Porto Rico and Hispaniola. At the island of Mona he fell in with a small sloop, the *St. Anthony*,

making her way to Antigua from the Dutch island of Curaçao, and with this he opened communications, presently sending her back to Curaçao in order to obtain fresh canvas with which to repair the sails of the *Quedagh Merchant*. This was brought back to him in due course, but his crew, as he afterwards said, refused to work the vessel home, whereupon he purchased the *St. Anthony*, transferred some of the *Quedagh Merchant's* goods to her, and with a handful of men started for New York. The *Quedagh Merchant*—which seems, however, never to have been seen again—he left, according to his own account, "in a good safe harbour in Hispaniola," in the care of a Mr. Henry Boulton, a merchant of Antigua.

Since Kidd knew quite well the charges he was bound to face, and since he was at any rate not wholly destitute of marketable goods, it has been argued that his deliberate return to New York is proof both of his innocence and his loyalty to his employers. But it is also open, of course, to the interpretation that he knew his patrons to be so powerful that they might be in a position to secure him against any ill consequences of his voyage, while his wife and family, and presumably the greater part of his possessions, were still in New England. The fact remains, however, that he arrived off New York and succeeded in getting into touch with an old friend of his, one Emmott, to whom he told his tale, and to whom he handed, as a partial proof of it, the two French passes that he had taken from his prizes.

Lord Bellamont was then at Boston, and while Kidd remained in the sloop, Emmott sought him out on Kidd's behalf and gave him the two French passes with which he had been entrusted. After hearing Emmott's story Bellamont sent Kidd an

envoy—the postmaster of Boston, one Duncan Campbell—who met Kidd, as he wrote to Bellamont, on board the sloop three leagues from Block Island. Lord Bellamont then wrote a letter to Kidd, which in the light of after events, can only at best be described as disingenuous, in which he finally said that he could no doubt obtain for him the King's pardon, " if you can be so clear as you (or Mr. Emmott for you) have said." Unluckily for himself Kidd decided to accept this, and on 1st July, 1699, arrived at Boston with his wife and family, to be immediately arrested by his former patron.

So ended Kidd's voyage, and once in the toils, there was to be no escape for him, though the end was not yet. Since for every reason it was desirable to send him to England, and since there was technically no machinery against piracy in New England, by means of which he could legitimately be tried, he was shipped across the Atlantic in the frigate *Advice*, arriving early in April, 1700. For a year he remained untried, languishing in prison, and it is perhaps significant that when, in the following May, he was brought to the Old Bailey, the first charge taken against him was not that of piracy, but the murder of the gunner, Moore, of which he was duly found guilty. He was then tried for the specific act of piracy in capturing the *Quedagh Merchant*, and though the two French passes that he relied on to prove the legitimacy of his action were then actually in England, he was unable, in spite of all his efforts, to secure their production in court.

He was accordingly found guilty of piracy, and a few days later was hanged, to become the subject of more broadsheets, tracts, and ballads, than any pirate before or since, while the legend grew that

he had buried more treasure than all the others put together. So died Kidd, an enigma still, but so did not die as yet, as we shall see, the pirates of Madagascar; and it is interesting to recall a petition, submitted to the House of Commons three or four years later, of which a copy is still in existence.

This somewhat ingenuous document, having begun by pointing out that certain pirates had for some years been finding the island of Madagascar to be "the most Proper if not the only Place in the World for their Abode," four-fifths of these pirates being English, suggested that there were only two means of abolishing them, namely, either by force or by persuasion. With regard to force the petition went on to point out that there were many practical objections to this course. One of these was that the pirates had "by their long Abode there and their Liberality in bestowing part of their Booties on the Inhabitants, so gained their Love and Esteem, that they may remove from Place to Place as they see Occasion, with as great Security as if they were Natives there." It was also pointed out that the pirates were frequently at sea, and that even "if the nests were destroyed, the birds would still be at large."

Persuasion, therefore, as the petition pointed out, would seem to be the right method to employ, and since the treasure which the pirates had accumulated could not be restored to its various owners, it was suggested that the pirates should be allowed to bring it back with them to England rather than leave it in Madagascar, where it would be "as Useless and Unprofitable as the Earth that covers it." It was also ingenuously explained that this course would be a very considerable advantage to the nation since so "considerable an Addition to the Capital Stock of the Kingdom must ease the

rest of Her Majesty's Subjects." The returned pirates, thus reclaimed and in good financial order, would also provide, as it was pointed out, " many Hundreds of as Bold and Skilful Mariners and Seamen as any are in the World," while a scandal would be removed that could not fail to redound to " the Eternal Reproach of the English Nation and Christian Religion."

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN TEACH OR BLACKBEARD

FOLLOWING the death of Henry Morgan in 1688, the disappearance of Avery in 1696, and the execution of Captain Kidd in 1701, there came the long war with France and Spain in which Marlborough won his great victories in Flanders. This meant that at sea there were abundant opportunities for legitimate privateersmen sailing under government letters of marque, and that there was in consequence a temporary decline in piracy naked and unashamed. But with the conclusion of peace in 1713, thousands of these privateers were thrown out of employment, and amongst the still half-settled West Indian Islands and scattered North-American sea-ports, there sprang up a new, and in many respects far more sordid and brutal, generation of pirates. Of these none was more notorious in his day, or afterwards more fearsome in anecdote and legend, than Edward Teach or Thatch, or, as he was more familiarly called, Blackbeard. Indeed he approaches nearer to the typical stage pirate than any other in history, and won his nickname, we are told, "from that large Quantity of Hair, which, like a frightful Meteor, covered his whole Face, and frightened America more than any Comet that has appeared there a long time. This Beard was black, which he suffered to grow of an extravagant length; as to Breadth it came up to his Eyes; he was accustomed

to twist it with Ribbon, in small Tails, and turned them about his Ears. In Time of Action, he wore a Sling over his Shoulders, with three brace of Pistols hanging in Holsters like Bandaliers; and stuck lighted Matches under his Hat, which appearing on each side of his Face, his Eyes naturally looking fierce and wild, made him altogether such a Figure that imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury from Hell to look more frightful."

Such was this successor to Morgan, Avery and Kidd. It is generally believed that he was born in Bristol, his parents being obscure, although it was afterwards claimed for him that he had respectable relations in the colony of Virginia. Nor was that unlikely, for at the time Teach was born, towards the end of the seventeenth century, there can have been but few families in Bristol lacking connections in the American settlements; while, with Liverpool and Glasgow still but the merest villages, its Atlantic trade was second only to that of London. Hither on any day might be seen, beating up Channel, merchantmen from the West Indies and North American Plantations, and amongst them those stout Colonial-built vessels, fashioned of American oak and decked with American pine, that were already beginning to cause, owing to their cheapness and efficiency, a certain amount of misgiving to the domestic shipbuilders. Laden with the products of the West, furs from New England, tobacco from Virginia, rice from Carolina, sugar from Barbados, drugs and spices, they were bringing wealth to the Bristol magnates; and indeed in the last few decades of the seventeenth century the growth in the prosperity of the town had been almost fantastic.

This then was the Bristol into which Teach was born, a Bristol teeming with easy fortunes, its

quaysides redolent with the treasures of the West and thronged with every imaginable kind of adventurer; and in due course it was from Bristol that he apparently sailed as an ordinary hand in a privateersman. In this he no doubt fought, and gained valuable experience during the war already referred to, and in due course found himself, like so many others, lacking a job when peace was declared. To a man of Teach's instincts the next step was easy. Piracy in the West Atlantic was already rife again, and it was probably inevitable that in due season he should have drifted to the notorious island of New Providence in the Bahamas. For here in this little sub-tropical island, with its vivid sunlight and bluest of blue seas, was the successor of the buccaneers' Tortuga and the miniature Madagascar of the West. Here the pirates could careen and clean their vessels, and here at the time when Teach began to be prominent, it was estimated that no fewer than eight hundred of them were making their permanent headquarters. Indeed to such an extent had their numbers grown that whereas the colonial traders had primarily connived at and even welcomed them, they were now beginning to find their own cargoes seized and carried off and their vessels destroyed or brought under the Black Flag. With a few discreditable exceptions, therefore, they were already looking askance at this increasing and wide-spread development of piracy, and the Carolina settlers in particular had already begun to press the authorities at home to furnish adequate protection.

Such was the position when, thanks to a certain Captain Hornigold, Teach gained his first command in the year 1716 and sailed from New Providence in company with Captain Hornigold up the coast of North America. We are told, he took a billop

from Havana, containing amongst other things a hundred and twenty barrels of flour; a sloop from Bermuda, which he afterwards released, lighter by several gallons of wines; and a ship bound from Madeira to South Carolina, containing a quantity of valuable plunder. With his confederate Hornigold, he then retired for a time to some secluded inlet on the coast of Virginia, after which the pair of them set sail again towards the Bahamas, capturing en route a French Guinea-man on its way to Martinique. This vessel, finding favour in Teach's eyes, he transferred his command to her with Hornigold's consent, and it was at this point that the two appear to have separated, probably towards the end of 1717.

Meanwhile at home in England the case of the Carolina settlers against the pirates had been stubbornly prosecuted by their agent, Abel Kettleby, in spite of the fact that the proprietors of the colony had frankly owned themselves utterly unable to afford any adequate defence. Kettleby had refused, however, to accept this discouragement, and had taken his case to the House of Commons, with the result that the matter had been brought before George I. The King referred it to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations. But this body, formerly remarkably efficient, was already beginning to degenerate, and it was not until further pressure had been exerted by the merchants of London and Bristol, who for many years had been protesting on their own account, that any definite measures were taken for the active suppression of these Atlantic pirates. Finally it was decided to issue a proclamation of pardon to all who should submit themselves to a competent authority, engage to give up their nefarious practices, and take an oath of loyalty to the King. It was also determined to send an expedition for the establishment of orderly

government in the island of New Providence, Captain Woodes Rogers being placed in command and given the necessary powers. Sailing in due course, and armed with the King's pardon, he arrived in New Providence during the summer of 1718, where he received amongst others the surrender to mercy of Teach's accomplice, Captain Hornigold. It seems probable, too, though the dates are uncertain, that earlier in this year, 1718, Teach himself had taken the opportunity, while careened on the North Carolina coast, to make his formal submission to the Governor.

Whether this was the case or not, however, it is certain that he regarded it very lightly, for in a few weeks he was once more at sea, probably in the same French Guinea-man that he had christened the *Queen Anne's Revenge*. This he had converted into a very formidable vessel by mounting in her some forty guns, and had soon made with her his first capture, the *Great Allen*, Captain Christopher Taylor, marooning her crew on the island of St. Vincent, and then, having plundered her, set her on fire. He next encountered a naval vessel, H.M.S. *Scarborough* of thirty guns, which pluckily engaged him for some hours, but finding the pirate too strong was obliged to draw out of action and put back to Barbados. Teach then set sail for Spanish America, and it was in the Bay of Honduras that he fell in with a pirate sloop of ten guns under the command of one Major Stede Bonnet.

Bonnet had been a merchant in the island of Barbados, a man of good family and considerable culture, but, as Teach quickly found, with a very limited and uncertain knowledge of navigation. He therefore persuaded him, considerably against his will, to resign the command of his sloop, into

which Teach put one of his own men, by name Richards, as commander under himself. He then took Bonnet into his own vessel, where he seems to have pointed out to him with a rare attempt at tact, that not being "used to the Fatigues and Care of such a Post," he could "live easy and at his Pleasure," not being obliged "to perform Duty but following his own inclination." Having got him safe aboard, however, Teach does not appear to have taken much further trouble to conceal his contempt of him—a contempt that was apparently shared, with as little concealment, by the remainder of the officers and crew.

Teach had thus provided himself with two vessels, one of forty guns and one of ten, and he next landed upon a small island near the coast of Honduras—probably Turneffe—where he took in fresh water. Here yet another vessel fell into his hands, the *Adventure* of Jamaica, under the command of Captain David Harriot or Heriot, whom Teach took on board together with his crew, putting an officer of his own in charge of the ship. This was one Basilica, or Israel, Hands—a character afterwards made use of by Robert Louis Stevenson—and who, as we shall see, was destined to play his part in the final act of Teach's drama.

This was still distant, however, or comparatively so. With three vessels now at his disposal, he took the seas again early in April, making further captures in the Bay of Honduras. These consisted of a large ship, the *Protestanl Cæsar* of Boston under Captain Wyar, three sloops hailing from Jamaica, and another one under the command of a Captain James. Having plundered the *Protestant Cæsar*, Teach set her on fire as a reprisal for the execution of some pirates at Boston, and one of the sloops was also burnt, "out of spite," we are told,

"to the owner." Teach with his little fleet then set sail for the island of Grand Cayman, some hundred miles west of Jamaica, where his only prey was a small vessel engaged in loading turtles, and from thence, having touched at the Bahamas, he arrived off the bar at Charlestown, the capital of South Carolina, in May, 1718.

Teach was now on the brink of what was perhaps his most daring exploit, since it was to involve nothing less than a virtual dictation to the capital and government of South Carolina. Stationed at the mouth of the river, he first took a passenger vessel that had just cleared on passage to London, and the next day captured a second ship, also outward bound, together with three others that were making their way in. Eight more, we are told, were ready to sail, but his presence outside the bar was now known and they remained in the harbour, not feeling themselves strong enough to challenge the pirate's guns. But worse was to follow. For on the strength of the prisoners that had fallen into his hands, including a prominent member of the Council, Teach decided to demand from the Governor a supply of various drugs of which his men were in need. He accordingly despatched Richards in one of the sloops, together with one of the prisoners named Marks. The latter was directed to negotiate with Johnson, the Governor, for the immediate delivery of a chest of medicine. For this mission Marks was allowed two days, Teach declaring that the penalty of failure would be the death of all the prisoners that he had captured, together with the destruction of the ships from which they had been taken and whatever of the cargo he did not require for his own purposes. Following though it did upon similar incidents, it was yet a demand wholly unparallelled in the history of the little

colony, and Governor Johnson decided to call a special meeting of the Council in order to consider the situation. But Teach had chosen his moment well, and while the anxious councillors interviewed Marks, Richards and his men, armed to the teeth, swaggered with impunity through the streets of Charlestown. Needless to say, the citizens were not of the calibre to regard such an exhibition with equanimity, but for reasons with which Teach was probably quite familiar, they were in no position actively to resent it.

Upon both the Carolinas, indeed, Fate had been pressing somewhat heavily during the previous six or seven years, following upon a fearful massacre by the Tuscarora Indians on the 2nd September, 1711. This had taken place in North Carolina and resulted in a fierce campaign against the Indians, in which the settlers north of Cape Fear had been compelled to seek aid of the South Carolinians. This had been willingly given, and under the command of Colonel John Barnwell, the forces of the two little colonies had succeeded in quelling the enemy, but only to be called upon, a few months later, to face another fierce attack. Indeed it had quickly become evident that all along the border, no less in South Carolina than in North, the Indian tribes were aflame with hostility and resolved if possible to wipe the settlers out. A more or less constant warfare had therefore ensued, with the result that four years later, South Carolina, with its manhood gravely depleted, and isolated by hundreds of miles from Virginia, the nearest colony strong enough to help, had found itself within measurable distance of actual extinction.

This might have happened in fact but for the prompt and generous action of Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia, who sent

down the only warship then on the Virginian coast, and appealed for volunteers to assist the unfortunate colony. To the lasting credit of the older settlement, the response was hearty and immediate, and within a few days there had sailed from Charlestown nearly two hundred stalwart Virginians. Even so, however, peace had not been enforced until most of the outlying farms had been destroyed and South Carolina laid waste by guerilla warfare to within some thirty miles of Charlestown.

It will thus be seen that the capital was in but a poor plight to offer any adequate opposition to Teach and his confederates, and bitter as was the indignation of the Governor and his Council at the terms presented to them through the hostage, Marks, it was finally decided that they must be accepted in the absence of any effective alternative. With what chagrin can be imagined, therefore, a chest of the required medicines, valued at some four hundred pounds, was handed to Richards and his associates for conveyance to Captain Teach, who thereupon released his prisoners, together with the captured ships, having plundered them of £1,500 in specie.

Such then was an exploit that within a very short while had resounded along the whole coast of North America and lent the name of Blackbeard so grim a significance that every kind of horror was readily believed of him. Thus he was alleged, amongst other accusations, to have had fourteen wives, to have claimed before his crew to be the Devil incarnate, while every mariners' inn was familiar with gruesome stories of his night-long orgies and debauches. In the end, however, owing to the feelings that it had aroused, it was probably the holding up of Charlestown that determined his fate, although for some months he ranged at large, and, as it seems, with small attempt at concealment. It

is practically certain indeed that, during this period, he was not only tolerated by the Governor of North Carolina, but was actually associated with him and his secretary in various more than doubtful business transactions.

It was at any rate to a convenient spot on the North Carolina coast that he sailed on leaving Charlestown, and here, in Topsail Inlet, some forty miles north of Cape Fear, he decided, in the first place, to break up his fleet. In the absence of Bonnet, therefore, who seems at this stage to have gone to the Governor of North Carolina for the King's pardon, he destroyed such of his vessels as he had no further use for, selected a score or so of his most hardened villains, and marooned the remainder without ceremony, to be rescued a few days later by Bonnet. He then sailed north for about a hundred miles and at Ocracoke Inlet, thirty miles south of Cape Hatteras, he established his headquarters within sixty miles of Bath, the capital of North Carolina, on the Pamlico River. Here for many years there was a secluded landing-place, traditionally known as Thatch's Hole, and it was from here that he renewed relations with Governor Eden and Tobias Knight, his secretary, with the latter of whom, who was actually Chief Justice for a time, he even seems occasionally to have resided.

Nor did he confine his attentions to North Carolina, for as he roved at will up and down the coast, there were many occasions when he operated as far north as Philadelphia, where a warrant was actually issued for his arrest. He was far too cunning, however, to allow it to be served, and secure in the friendship of Eden and Knight, retreated again to Ocracoke, where the law was on his side, or could not at any rate be moved to apprehend him. But it was an unholy partnership;

and although it might have survived, perhaps, given a less violent and more discreet character, it was his growing insolence towards the trading and unofficial community that ultimately proved his undoing.

Already pretty certain that their own authorities were never likely to give them material help, this had become finally clear to the merchants of North Carolina when Teach had appeared at Bath one day with a big French merchantman. This had been laden with sugar and various other goods, and although it was perfectly plain that Teach had captured it, he swore an affidavit, which the Governor at once accepted, that he had found it abandoned at sea. It had then been decided by Tobias Knight, sitting in the capacity of Vice-Admiralty Judge, to be a legitimate prize, and Teach had been allowed to land the cargo and dispose of it for his personal profit. He had decided it to be wiser, however, not to retain the vessel, and had accordingly beached and burned her.

With this example, then, before their eyes, the North Carolina traders decided to appeal to Virginia, Spotswood, the Governor of which, had already proved himself to be a man of a very different type. He had helped them before against the Indians. Would he help them now against this pirate? Although juridically the position was a delicate one, since he had no legislative authority over the neighbouring colony, Spotswood made up his mind that the matter was an urgent one and promised to do his best to bring Teach to justice. He accordingly issued a proclamation setting forth the facts and offering a reward for the pirate's apprehension, namely one hundred pounds for Teach himself, fifteen pounds for each of his officers, and ten pounds for every member of his crew. Being a man of initiative, he also decided to take instant and active

measures, rightly judging that, for the sake of his own coast-line, Blackbeard would be better out of the way.

It was an irregular enterprise, of course, but it seems to have been one that appealed to Spotswood, and keeping his own counsel, as far as possible, he made his preparations with the greatest thoroughness. In these he was assisted by the fact that there happened to be lying in Hampton Roads two British naval vessels, H.M.S. *Lyne* and *Pearl*, under the command of Captain Ellis Brand and Lieutenant Maynard. Both these officers he found quite willing to undertake the enterprise, while both being representatives in a sense of the Home government, might the more plausibly carry it through. He then hired two sloops at his own expense, put them in the charge of Brand and Maynard, supplied them with North Carolina pilots, and gave them full instructions as regards the precautions to be taken.

Accordingly the two vessels, towards the middle of November, stole out of James River and made their way south towards Ocracoke Inlet, before which they arrived on 22nd November. All vessels bound to and from the Pamlico River had been stopped and secrecy enjoined upon them, and although Teach had received a warning by messengers sent from Bath with a letter from Tobias Knight, he had had so many other alarms that he had not taken this one with any great degree of seriousness. He and his twenty men, therefore, were more or less taken by surprise, although it was clear from the outset that Brand and Maynard would have no easy task. Indeed from the beginning of the encounter, Teach appears to have acted in full keeping with his character; and after some preliminary courtesies with Lieutenant Maynard, we

are told he "took a Glass of Liquor, and drank to him with these words: *Damnation seize my soul if I give you Quarters, or take any from you.* In answer to which, Mr. Maynard told him *That he expected no Quarters from him nor should he give him any.*"

The action then began with a broadside from the pirate that did considerable damage to Maynard's sloop, which was afterwards boarded by Teach and his men. A desperate hand-to-hand fight followed. In this the Virginians lost twelve men killed and another twenty-one wounded, but accounted for half the pirate crew, making prisoners of most of the survivors. As for Teach himself, after a duel with Maynard, he fell fighting to the last, and, as one of his historians would have us believe, having "received a Shot into his Body from the Pistol that Lieutenant Maynard discharged, yet he stood his Ground and fought with great Fury, till he received five and twenty Wounds and five of them by Shot." Finally his throat was cut by one of the Virginian sailors, his head afterwards being severed from his body and hung as visible evidence of victory from the bowsprit of Captain Brand's vessel.

In addition to the pirates' ship, the victors discovered amongst other loot twenty-five hogsheads of sugar, one hundred and forty-five bags of cocoa, a barrel of indigo, and a bale of cotton. Nor was this all, for Captain Brand then made his way up the river to Bath to demand the cargo of sugar and other goods that had been removed from the French merchantman. A considerable proportion of this had disappeared, but a substantial amount remained, much of it being found, to that official's discomforture, in one of the barns of Tobias Knight.

The letter of this Vice-Admiralty Judge, in which Teach had been warned of the approaching expedi-

tion from Virginia, had also been found in the pirate's pocket, to be produced later under circumstances, from the toils of which Knight must be considered fortunate to have escaped. Captain Brand, with his holds full and Teach's head swinging before him, then sailed triumphantly back to Virginia, although even then a certain reticence was observed. It was at any rate not until March in the following year that Governor Spotswood took his Council into his confidence and laid a full report before them of the action he had taken, an action which his Council unanimously endorsed.

The pirate prisoners were then tried at Williamsburgh, one of the chief witnesses against them being Israel Hands, whom Teach had playfully wounded a few days before his death, and who had been in Bath when the Virginians arrived at Ocracoke. Telling the full story of the capture of the Frenchman, Hands was also able to throw very considerable light upon the relations between his late chief and the Governor of North Carolina and his secretary. So definite in fact were his charges that, after four of the pirates had been hanged, proceedings were taken against Knight, who was eventually acquitted, chiefly on the ground that he had been acting on the Governor's orders. As for Eden himself, there is no record that any proceedings were ever taken against him, while Israel Hands drifted back to London, lamed for life, we are told, by Blackbeard's bullet.

CHAPTER V

THE GENTLEMAN PIRATE OF BARBADOS

In telling the story of Captain Teach, a brief reference was made to his connection with Major Stede Bonnet of Barbados, who had been treated by Teach and his crew with scarcely disguised contempt. To the coastal communities, however, of the North American colonies in the years 1717 and 1718 he was a figure almost as terrifying as, and considerably more romantic than the notorious Blackbeard himself; and he is certainly one of the most interesting and enigmatic figures in the pirates' gallery. Indeed he might almost have been called a pirate *malgre lui*, and seems, in the world of piracy, to have been a sort of Hamlet, attaining every now and then to such a point of daring that the final reward for his capture was seven times greater than that offered for Blackbeard. On the other hand, there were days and weeks when, reminded of the position from which he had descended, he accused himself of being unworthy to bear the name of Englishman; and he seems to have sunk at such periods into depths of mental depression but little removed from actual madness. It was to a disorder of the mind, in fact, that, according to many of his friends, his entrance into piracy had to be attributed; and it is certainly difficult to discover from the records that we possess any other reason why he should have adopted such a mode of life.

Unlike Teach and so many of his comrades, he was not an out-of-work privateersman, and although it is possible as a Barbados merchant, he may have had shares in privateering enterprises—and may consequently have found himself, after the peace of 1713, faced with a diminution of income—there is no suggestion that he was driven by lack of means to adopt the hazardous career of piracy. Moreover, he had no knowledge of the art of navigation, and we are thus confronted with the curious spectacle of a well-educated, middle-aged man, of good family and in apparently prosperous circumstances—and a man who had served too with distinction in the Barbados army—suddenly taking to piracy in spite of being handicapped by a complete ignorance of the art of seamanship. Nor did his subsequent trial elicit any particular motive, although the stern old Chief Justice of South Carolina attributed it, with some confidence, to the general ethical laxity of the time. "I have just reason to fear," he said, "that the principles of religion that had been instilled into you by your education have been at least corrupted, if not entirely defaced, by the scepticism and infidelity of this wicked age, and that what time you allowed for study was rather applied to the polite literature and vain philosophy of the times than a serious searching after the law and will of God."

That was the opinion of Nicholas Trott, presiding over the court at Charlestown, and it is hardly more convincing perhaps than the suggestion of "matrimonial discomfort" afterwards put forward by Captain Johnson, a somewhat unctuous, but often suspiciously accurate, contemporary historian of this era of piracy. An interesting problem, therefore, must be considered unsolved, since Bonnet himself seems to have left no clue; and all we can

say definitely is that on a certain dark night, early in the year 1717, he slipped out to sea across the bar of Bridgetown as the owner and commander of a ten-gun sloop.

This he had named the *Revenge*, after a common pirate custom, and with a crew of some seventy men, he had first sailed north-east to hover about the converging trade-routes at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. He speedily made a few small captures, among them being the *Anne* of Glasgow, the *Turbet* of Barbados, which he afterwards set on fire, the *Endeavour* of Bristol, and the *Young* of Leith. From thence he sailed to New York, and in the neighbourhood of Long Island, took a West Indies sloop, which he plundered, afterwards landing his prisoners at Gardiner's Island where he bought and paid for some provisions. He then appears to have made up his mind to seek some more temperate, and perhaps less dangerous, waters, for we next hear of him, in the month of August, off the bar of Charlestown in South Carolina, where he captured a sloop from Barbados, containing rum, sugar, and negroes, and also a brigantine from New England, which he plundered and sent on her way. The sloop, however, he took up the coast with him, where he later careened and burnt her, and it was here that he had differences with his crew as to their future procedure. Indeed, throughout his voyage he seems to have had similar troubles owing to his own ignorance of matters of the sea, although he apparently succeeded by his superior courage and breeding in maintaining the necessary authority. He successfully asserted himself, however, for it was still as the commander of the *Revenge* that we next hear of him cruising in the Bay of Honduras, although it was here that he was destined to suffer the temporary eclipse to

which we have already referred. For it was at this period in his curious career that he fell in with Teach, a pirate of a much coarser and equally overbearing type, and a man quite exempt from the scruples that so often afflicted Bonnet.

After an exchange of courtesies, the two nevertheless agreed to keep company, Bonnet's sloop evidently being regarded by Teach as a valuable asset, but the latter soon discovered that his gentlemanly colleague was a very poor hand as a navigator. He therefore persuaded him, as we have seen, to leave the *Revenge*, offering him a comfortable berth in his own vessel, and for the next few months it was Teach rather than Bonnet who dictated the movements of the combined fleet. Indeed during this time, Bonnet appears to have fallen into one of his most melancholy and introspective moods, bewailing the fact that he ever took to piracy, and becoming, as we have said, an object of general contempt. He remained associated with Teach, however, during the notorious holding up of Charlestown, in which Blackbeard forced the governor to pay him tribute, and it was not until the latter had put into Topsail Inlet, some 180 miles north of the South Carolina capital, that the two parted company again, some time in May, 1718.

Here Blackbeard decided to disband his company, while Bonnet took advantage of the opportunity to visit the Governor of North Carolina and accept the King's pardon which had recently been offered, and which, as we have seen, was part of the policy determined upon in England in view of the enormous increase in colonial piracy. It is to be feared, however, that most of the benificiaries regarded it very lightly—Blackbeard himself seems to have taken it a short time previously—and it is probable that Bonnet's action, in spite of his

recent qualms, was dictated by policy rather than repentance. He at any rate obtained an official clearance for the island of St. Thomas, where he proposed offering his services as a privateersman in the war that had just begun between Spain and the Triple Alliance of England, France, and the States General, but within a very short time of returning to Topsail Inlet changed his mind, probably owing to Teach. For that wily mariner, in Bonnet's absence, had not only vanished with most of the plunder, but had also taken with him the pick of the crew and marooned the remainder on a neighbouring island. Here Bonnet found them and explaining his future plans, persuaded them to take service with him in the *Revenge*, now re-christened the *Royal James*, after the Pretender son of James II.

Meanwhile, news of Teach had somehow reached Topsail Inlet, and hearing that he had established himself near Ocracoke Inlet some thirty miles south of Cape Hatteras, Bonnet, whose mood had entirely changed again, decided to pursue him in order to settle accounts. A sufficiently ugly customer, it was a bold thing to do, but by the time Bonnet arrived at Ocracoke, Teach had once more set off on his travels, and the two were destined never to meet again. According to his previous announcement, Bonnet should now have set sail for St. Thomas, but he decided to commence operations at once, and with his sailing master, David Heriot—the same respectable skipper that Teach had captured in the Bay of Honduras—he re-appeared in July, 1718, off the Capes of Virginia. He made one or two unimportant captures, chiefly for the purpose of victualling—taking from one small vessel ten barrels of pork and four hundredweight of bread, and plundering another, some six

miles off Cape Henry, of a certain amount of rum and molasses. Having replenished his stores, however, he began a course of undisguised and flagrant robbery, and at the same time assumed the alias of Captain Thomas. Still prowling about the entrance of Chesapeake Bay, he captured two ships bound to Glasgow with Virginia tobacco, a small Virginian sloop on its way to Bermuda, from which he took twenty barrels of pork and some bacon, and another Virginia-man bound for Glasgow, which he lightened, we are told, of some combs, pins and needles.

With a notoriety now quickly overtaking that of any pirate operating in these seas, he then journeyed north towards Delaware Bay, landing a bunch of prisoners at Port Lewis, a town that he threatened to blow to pieces if he were in any way interfered with. While cruising near the mouth of the Delaware River, he next took a schooner bound to Boston from North Carolina, from which he recruited a couple of men besides seizing two dozen calf-skins; and a few days later he relieved two Bristol vessels of money and goods to the value of £100. He then took a sixty-ton sloop laden with cargo from Philadelphia to Barbados, and two or three days later, some twenty miles off Delaware Bay, he captured the fifty-ton sloop, *Fortune*, under the command of Captain Thomas Read, also bound for Barbados.

Up to this time, although he had pressed into his nefarious service a few men from the vessels which he had boarded, Bonnet does not seem to have made any attempt to retain the vessels which he had plundered. But he decided for some unexplained reason to keep the *Fortune*, and a few days afterwards this vessel was in company with him near Cape Henlopen, when another sloop, the *Francis*,

bound from Antigua to Philadelphia, under the command of Captain Manwareing, hove in sight. This, too, he decided to retain, and since it was the capture of these two little vessels that formed the specific charge upon which he was afterwards tried at Charlestown, we are able to obtain some light from this incident not only upon his methods, but upon the sort of plunder for which he was risking his neck.

Thus we learn that the *Francis*, which was evidently cautiously coasting along on her way to Philadelphia, had come to anchor on the 31st July, "between nine and ten of the clock, there running a strong tide at ebb," in a suitably sheltered position in the neighbourhood of Cape Henlopen. The situation seemed a peaceful one and remote from all human habitation, but in half an hour's time, Captain Manwareing, to his surprise, saw a small boat approaching the *Francis*. On hailing this, he was told that it contained Captain Thomas Richards of St. Thomas, and Captain Read of Philadelphia, whom he welcomed courteously and invited on board. No sooner was the boat's crew on the deck, however, than cutlasses were drawn and it was obvious to Captain Manwareing that his ship had been captured. He was then taken on board the *Royal James*, some of the pirates being left in charge of the *Francis*, of whose conduct the mate, Mr. James Killing, afterwards gave an exact description.

Coming into the cabin after the captain had gone, "the first thing they begun with," said Mr. Killing, "was the pineapples which they cut down with their cutlasses. They asked me if I would not come and eat along with them. I told them that I had but little stomach to eat. They asked me why I looked so melancholy. I told them

I looked as well as I could. They asked me what liquor I had on board. I told them some rum and some sugar. So they made bold with the punch and went to drinking of the Pretender's health and hoped to see him King of the English nation; then sang a song or two." The next day the *Royal James* came alongside, and it is interesting to read the list of goods of which she robbed the *Francis*. These were twenty-six hogsheads, three tierces, and three barrels of rum valued at £263 6s. 6d.; twenty-five hogsheads of molasses valued at £138 13s. 8d.; three barrels and three tierces of sugar valued at £33; two pockets of cotton worth £2 10s. 6d.; sixty weights of indigo worth £9; one new cable valued £2 10s.; nineteen French and Spanish pistoles, two half moidores of gold, fourteen French crowns, 1 pair of silver buckles worth 10s., and a silver watch valued £7.

With his two latest captures, the *Francis* and the *Fortune*, Bonnet decided to make for the south, and presently came to anchor towards the end of August near Cape Fear, 140 miles north of Charlestown. Here the *Fortune* was also plundered, the chief articles that were taken from her being various kinds of provisions, including twenty barrels of flour, a barrel of linseed oil, two tierces of ham, and six china plates. By this time, however, the *Royal James* was found to be leaking very considerably, and a small shallop was captured and broken up in order to provide materials with which to repair her.

Meanwhile the tidings of their arrival at Cape Fear had reached Charlestown, and the Governor, Robert Johnson, and his councillors met to consider whether any measures were possible. But the problem was a difficult one, for not only was there no naval vessel of any description in the harbour, but the manhood of the town was still severely

depleted from the recent wars against the frontier Indians.

As has so often been the case, however, in the chequered history of English overseas colonization, the emergency found the man, in this particular case Colonel William Rhett. Possessing great force of character, boundless courage, and considerable private means, he was then Receiver-General of South Carolina, and volunteered, if the Governor would give him permission, to fit out two sloops at his own expense. The Governor at once agreed, and of the vessels in harbour, the *Henry* and *Sea Nymph* were selected, the first mounting eight guns and with a crew of seventy men becoming Colonel Rhett's flagship, while the *Sea Nymph*, containing sixty men and eight guns, was placed under the command of Captain Fayrer Hall. Preparations were immediately set in hand, and on September 10th Colonel Rhett went on board, the two vessels being then taken across the harbour to Sullivan's Island for their final fitting up.

But the trials of the little community were not yet over, for while Rhett was still at work on Sullivan's Island, a small sloop from Antigua came into Charlestown harbour with the news that she had been robbed by yet another pirate, the famous Charles Vane, who was even then outside the bar in a brigantine equipped with twelve guns and containing a crew of ninety men. This second marauder had also captured a sloop from Barbados and a slaver from the Guinea coast, while a day or two later, he interrupted four more London-bound vessels, two of which, the *Neptune* and the *Emperor*, he had succeeded in taking. Such was the news brought into Charlestown, and Rhett therefore decided to postpone his trip to Cape Fear, and sailed on the 15th September after the

pirate Vane, who appears to have got wind, however, of Rhett's intentions. After a fruitless expedition, therefore, Rhett returned to Charlestown, but sailed for Cape Fear on the 20th September, examining the coast closely for tracks of Vane and arriving at his destination on Friday, 26th September.

He was now in a region that, throughout these lawless years had been notorious as a pirates' haunt, and though he does not seem to have guessed as yet that Captain Thomas was actually the renowned Major Stede Bonnet, his daring can be gauged by the fact that in venturing into the Cape Fear River, he might well have found himself confronted with half a dozen pirate companies. Thus Blackbeard himself was known to be still at large, to say nothing of Vane with his twelve-gun brigantine, while both Worley and Moody, pirates hardly less celebrated, were then at work in the same waters. It was no easy task, therefore, that Rhett had undertaken, and as he faced the shoals and sandbanks of this river of ill-repute, he met with a mishap that might easily have wrecked his whole enterprise, and that, even as it was, cost him a good many lives. For owing to his ignorance of the stream, and the defective knowledge of the pilot upon whom he was relying, he ran aground, just as, beyond a spit of land, he had sighted the masts of Bonnet's sloop and its two prizes.

It was a heartbreaking accident, since it robbed Colonel Rhett of all the advantages of a possible surprise, and within a very short time, Bonnet had been informed of the presence of the new-comers into the river. He accordingly sent three armed boats to reconnoitre, and these were seen hastening back with the news that the two sloops, far from being the innocent merchantmen that had first

been surmised, were in reality heavily gunned and obviously out for trouble. But for the moment they were helpless. It would be late at night before the tide would refloat them, and faced with what was evidently destined to be the fight of his life, Bonnet's courage rose to its highest point. Throughout the hours of darkness the pirates made their preparations, almost within earshot of the stranded Carolinians, and as the dawn broke on Saturday, September 27th, over the little-frequented river threading the primeval wilderness, Colonel Rhett and his men, looking beyond the intervening tongue of land, saw the topsails of the *Royal James* being run up in readiness. They then heard the ring of chains as the anchors were hoisted aboard, and a few minutes later, the pirate ship rounded the headland, with all her sails set and bellying before the land wind, blowing strongly down the river.

It was now apparent to Rhett that his opponent, abandoning his prizes, was making for the open sea for a running fight, and he accordingly ordered both his sloops to weigh anchor and put across the estuary to intercept him. Taking position one on either quarter of him, it was Rhett's idea to force his foe ashore, but once again ignorance of the channel proved as disastrous to himself as to Bonnet. For while the *Royal James*, swinging to one side in order to elude her would-be captors, was quickly aground on a hidden shoal, a minute or two later both the Charlestown sloops were in a like predicament on the same sandbank. Moreover, while the *Henry*, with Colonel Rhett on board, was within a pistol shot of the pirate, the supporting *Sea Nymph*, which had been trying to cut across Bonnet's bow, was lying stranded well out of range. It was evident that neither of the three vessels would be able to get afloat again before the return of the tide

in five hours' time, and meanwhile the *Henry* had been placed at a disadvantage that might again have proved fatal to the whole expedition. For in heeling over, the deck of the *Royal James* had been turned away from Colonel Rhett's flagship, while the deck of the latter, tilted in the same direction, lay fully exposed to the pirate's guns. Indeed it seemed at first as if this accident would be in itself sufficient to determine the issue, and Bonnet's men, we are told, in a contemporary Charlestown pamphlet, "made a wiff in their bloody flag, and beckoned with their hats in derision to our people to come aboard them; which they only answered with cheerful huzzas and told them it would soon be their turn."

Fire was then opened on both sides, and for five hours the duel continued, the hard-pressed crew of the *Henry* taking what cover they could, but suffering heavy casualties under the pirate's broadsides. Indeed of the total number of seventy men, ten were killed outright, and fourteen more wounded, many of them so severely that they died a few hours later. With infinite spirit, however, and inspired by the stalwart example of their leader, they maintained their resistance under these unequal conditions until the pirates became more and more uneasy. For now the tide was beginning to creep up again, and it soon became apparent to all the combatants that the victory would rest with the side whose vessel or vessels were first afloat. With what anxiety the rising water was watched, therefore, can well be imagined; and when the battered *Henry* was seen to be slowly righting, while the *Royal James* still remained immovable, Bonnet's crew began to lose their courage and demand his surrender to the Charlestown sloop. Once again, however, in spite of his Hamlet-like doubtings,

Bonnet seems to have risen to the height of his dark destiny, and threatened to spatter the deck with the brains of all his men who did not resist to the last.

Meanwhile, Rhett, who had been busy repairing the more serious of his damages, had found to his great satisfaction that the *Henry* was freely navigable and would soon answer readily to the helm; and in a short time he was able to close with the *Royal James*, prepared if necessary to take her by storm. By this time, too, the *Sea Nymph* was also free, and seeing that further resistance would indeed be hopeless, the pirates hoisted a flag of truce and the *Royal James* surrendered unconditionally. It was then to his surprise that Rhett discovered that he had been fighting the notorious Stede Bonnet, while he also learned that the pirates had lost during the action seven men killed and five wounded. The *Henry* was too damaged to be able to take the open sea, and Rhett was obliged to remain in the river for another three days before he was at length able to set sail for Charlestown in company with the *Royal James*, the *Fortune* and *Francis*. He arrived back safely, however, on 3rd October, "to the great joy of the whole Province," and two days later Bonnet and some thirty of his men were handed over to the Provost-Marshal, Captain Nathaniel Partridge.

As there were no prisons in the town, they were confined under military guard in the public watch-house, Bonnet himself, in view of his superior social station, being allowed to reside in the Marshal's own house with two sentinels on guard over him. A little later, his sailing master, David Heriot, and Ignatius Pell, the boatswain, who had agreed to turn King's evidence, were also transferred to the Marshal's residence, and now a somewhat piquant

situation arose. Detested though the pirates were by the bulk of the people, yet for many years they and their like had conferred many illegitimate benefits in the way of cheap goods upon the citizens of the struggling little colony. Moreover, two of the prisoners were Charlestown men, while Bonnet himself was a picturesque figure, and there soon began to be agitations, amounting at times to riots, in favour of pardoning the prisoners and letting them go free. But Governor Johnson, a man of considerable strength of character, was firmly resolved to make an example of them, and was highly indignant when it was discovered on October 25th—three days before the trial—that Bonnet and Heriot had escaped during the night, the sentinels having been bribed to let them go. Who was responsible for this never transpired, although it was significant, perhaps, that Captain Nathaniel Partridge was superseded a few days later. Governor Johnson immediately offered a reward of £700 for the escaped prisoners.

His resolution was stiffened, too, by the fact that just at this time there had appeared outside the bar of Charlestown yet another heavily-armed pirate, namely Worley, from the north. This had necessitated a further expedition, led in this case by the Governor himself, and resulting on November 4th, in the fiercest sea-fight that South Carolina had ever known. It had been completely successful, but it had the more impressed Johnson with the necessity of enforcing the sternest measures, and four days later the majority of Bonnet's accomplices paid their penalty upon the gallows. This mixed crew, many of whom had probably had but little alternative to accepting Bonnet's service, included, besides the two Charlestown men, five from Jamaica, three from Aberdeen, three from London, two from

Glasgow, two from Bristol, one from Newcastle, one from Guernsey, and one from Oporto.

Meanwhile, news had been received that Bonnet, Heriot, and the companions they had persuaded to join them, had been obliged to return to Sullivan's Island, the little boat, in which they had escaped, having been forced back by bad weather. Johnson once more, therefore, entrusted the intrepid Rhett with the dangerous task of recapturing him, and crossing in the darkness, Rhett began a methodical search of the low-growing myrtle woods sheltering the island sandhills. With infinite caution he quartered the island, and at last came upon Bonnet and his party, upon whom he at once opened fire, killing Captain Heriot, an Indian, and a negro. For the second time Bonnet was obliged to surrender and was brought back to Charlestown on November 6th, two days before his unhappy colleagues paid the penalty for their misdoings.

Even so there was a strong movement to save Bonnet from execution, Bonnet himself putting forward the plea that he should be taken to England for trial and judgment. In fact, it is said that his captor, Colonel Rhett, chivalrously offered to take him across the Atlantic, going bail in a substantial sum that he would deliver him safely in London. But Governor Johnson was not to be shaken, and in the Chief Justice, Nicholas Trott, he had a grim ally when it came to the task of ridding South Carolina of such men as Bonnet. After having been found guilty, therefore, of piratically seizing the *Francis*, Bonnet pleaded guilty of taking the *Fortune*, and, in spite of a plea for mercy, evidently written by him in one of his most abject moods, he was hanged at White Point, "within the flowing of the tide," on December 10th, 1718.

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO WOMEN PIRATES

In the *London Journal* of March 25th, 1721, there appeared a small paragraph to the effect that two troublesome pirates, John Racan and George Fetherston, had recently been hanged in Jamaica. It was further stated that several of their comrades had also paid the extreme penalty for their crimes, Racan and Fetherston being subsequently hung in chains as a warning to any possible imitators. It was a brief paragraph and probably conveyed but little to the majority of its genteel London readers. But it represented a piece of work on which Sir Nicholas Lawes, the Governor of Jamaica, was entitled to congratulate himself, as well as his patrol officer, Captain Barnet, who had effected the captures. For John Rackam, Rockum, or Racan, had been one of the most daring local pirates, and for several years had been haunting the West Indian islands and taking toll of their merchant shipping. Moreover, behind the paragraph there lay a drama that in its mingling of courage, self-sacrifice, and guilt, was surely as strange as any to which the early eighteenth century lent a turbulent background.

For it appeared at the trial that two of Rackam's crew were in fact women, disguised as men, and that each had played a part second to none, and indeed

superior to most, in physical bravery. Nor were they ordinary members of that class, not unfamiliar in the annals of British piracy, of women sailing under the Black Flag in the capacity of wives or sweethearts. For Mary Read, although the story of her earlier life lacks the verification of her later adventures, seems to have preserved ideals of personal conduct rare in her chosen surroundings, while Anne Bonny was a girl of gentle upbringing, and the run-away daughter of a man of considerable wealth. Tragically as each, too, had been the sport of fate, before they were thus thrown together in Rackam's little company, both of them had refused, in the spirit of high adventure, to allow themselves to be crushed by mere misfortune, and it is impossible in reading their stories, and especially that of Mary Read, to deny them a certain tribute of admiration.

Born in England towards the end of the seventeenth century, Mary Read was the daughter, we are told, of a sailor's wife, her mother having been left by her husband, soon after marriage, to go upon a voyage from which he never returned. While he was away, a son was born, Mary being the second and illegitimate child. Soon afterwards, while her mother was still in concealment, the elder and legitimate child died, and the opportunity thus arose, or so her mother seems to have thought, to perform an act of substitution. Accordingly, a year or two later, Mary's mother, with Mary herself dressed in boy's clothes, reappeared at the house of her mother-in-law, representing Mary to be her legitimate offspring. The grandmother was apparently attracted by the child and offered to bring it up, but the mother pleaded that she could not bring herself to part with it, and was therefore allowed by the grandmother a small weekly sum of

money—a crown, we are told—to assist in its maintenance.

Being in dire poverty, it now became necessary that the deception should be continued, although her mother deemed it wise, when Mary grew a little older, to let her into the secret and secure her intelligent co-operation. Presently the grandmother died, however, and somewhere about the age of thirteen or fourteen, Mary seems finally to have left home and taken service with a Frenchwoman in the capacity of page-boy. Why she should have done this is not quite clear, but being physically strong and of a roving temperament, she soon became tired of this particular kind of life and resolved to see the world in a man-of-war. This was her first experience of the sea, and in later life it was probably of considerable use to her, but it was not very long before she was ashore again, this time as a cadet in the army in Flanders.

Here she served at first in an infantry regiment, where her record, we are assured, was of such a nature that, had she been able to afford it, she would have had no difficulty in obtaining a commission as an officer. Being penniless, however, apart from her scanty pay, this was a thing not to be thought of, and her next experience was that of a cavalryman, in which capacity she again served with distinction. But here, for the first time apparently, she found her sex becoming an embarrassment in a new and wholly unexpected way. Hitherto a life of adventure on an equality with her masculine companions had been all that she demanded. But now she found herself becoming deeply attached to a Flemish fellow-soldier in her regiment. It was an awkward predicament and one that seems to have preoccupied her considerably, for whereas she had been previously noticeable for the strict care of her

accoutrements, it began to be remarked that she was becoming curiously negligent both as to their upkeep and her own personal appearance. Moreover, it was observed that whenever the young Fleming was ordered upon some particularly dangerous duty, Mary would invariably find some pretext for accompanying him and sharing his peril. For an old campaigner this was an odd characteristic, and her sex being entirely unsuspected by the rest of the regiment, it was charitably supposed by everybody concerned, including the young Fleming himself, that her mind had become affected.

But Mary was hard-headed enough, even though her heart had so unexpectedly betrayed her, and at last she decided it was necessary to let the object of her affections into her carefully guarded secret. It was a risky move. But Mary's knowledge of the world, as well as her own strength of character, enabled her to justify it, and the young Fleming, deeply impressed with her courage and modesty, soon besought her to become his wife. To this she willingly agreed, and at the end of the campaign, the rest of the regiment was taken into the young people's confidence, and they were publicly married, the officers subscribing handsomely to give so original a couple a substantial wedding present. With this they then resolved to go into business, and obtaining their discharge from the army, they set up an eating-house, known as the Three Horse Shoes, near the Castle of Breda in Brabant. Here, owing to the interest taken in their strange story, they seem for a short time to have lived very prosperously, and here, as it might well have seemed, Mary was safely launched upon an ordinary happy and successful married life. But it was not to be. After a brief period of prosperity her husband became ill and died, while the signing of

peace robbed the little inn of the bulk of its custom.

Mary was once more down and out. But with a courage that never failed her, she resolved to cut her losses, and enlisted as a private in an infantry regiment. But the glamour had now gone from this life, and the peace-time routine of a small Dutch garrison was more than she could stand. She therefore decided to break altogether with the Old World and its associations, and to seek her fortune in the West Indies. It was a characteristic decision. But the tragedy that dogged her was not so easily to be shaken off, and the ship in which she left Holland for the New World was presently captured by English pirates. Afterwards it was released, having been plundered, but, as the only English person on board, Mary, whose sex still apparently remained unsuspected, was forcibly recruited. It was, therefore, if not as a pirate, at any rate in a pirate vessel that she made her acquaintance with the West, and her subsequent history would seem to suggest that she was not long in accustoming herself to the life. For though she and her new friends, as we are told, presently accepted the King's pardon and settled down peacefully for a while on shore, we next hear of her enlisting as a privateer in the Island of New Providence in 1718.

But here, it must be confessed, it becomes a little hard accurately to synchronize her adventures. For, according to one contemporary historian with a considerable degree of obviously inside information, it was the Peace of Ryswick, which was signed in 1697, that destroyed the commerce of the Three Horse Shoes, and determined Mary to cross the Atlantic. And this would seem to suggest that the pardon referred to was that of William III issued in 1698-99. But that would leave seventeen

years of her life more or less unaccounted for, while it would postpone her later adventures to a time when she must have been nearing forty years of age. It would therefore seem more likely that the peace in question was in reality that of Utrecht in 1713; that the wars she served in were the campaigns of Marlborough; and that the King's pardon, of which she and her friends availed themselves, was that of George I in 1717. Whether this be the case or not it seems fairly certain that in the autumn of 1718, and still in her almost life-long disguise as a man, she was applying for employment in New Providence.

This was the little island in the Bahamas, to which we have already made reference, and to which, as the chief pirate centre in the West Atlantic, Captain Woodes Rogers had just been sent by the English government. Here, as a preliminary measure, he had offered the King's pardon to every pirate desiring to avail himself of it, on an undertaking that he would thenceforward desist from piracy and take the oath of allegiance to His Majesty. Most of them did so, some of them being genuinely glad, no doubt, to use this as a way of escape from a life that they abhorred, but into which they had been forced by necessity or under penalty of torture and death. Probably to the larger number—as to Teach and Bonnet, for instance—it was merely an opportunity, as it were, to take a breather; and they were soon at sea again under the Black Flag, pursuing their old avocations. But the outbreak of war with Spain later in the year afforded an outlet for many on board privateers, several of these being equipped by Woodes Rogers in his capacity of Governor of New Providence.

That was the position then when Mary drifted to the island, and it was upon a privateer that she

next set sail, as an ordinary seaman before the mast and as well able to take care of herself as any. Hardly had land faded out of sight, however, when most of the crew mutinied, Mary amongst them, and seized the vessel, and the government privateer of a few hours before was the declared enemy of every government. Whether Rackam himself had a hand in this particular seizure is not clear and is perhaps not likely. But there was still a certain understanding—possibly a lingering relic of the older buccaneering brotherhood traditions—between the more enterprising and outstanding pirates, and transitory alliances were continually taking place. With these there would be exchanges of men and material, together with a good deal of more or less violent recruiting of hands; and it was probably in some such fashion that Mary eventually found herself serving under a commander for whom probably she had a considerable admiration. For Mary, as she grew older, had apparently abated nothing either of her originality or strength of character, and it is recorded of her that she frankly stated her full approval of the penalty of hanging for captured pirates. Only in this way, she said, could the pirate fraternity be assured of being joined by men of courage and kept within limits sufficiently small to ensure that enough merchantmen would venture to take the seas. But in order to follow her further history, as well as that of Anne Bonny, her future associate, let us turn for a moment to consider very briefly the career of Rackam himself.

Less renowned than certain of his West Atlantic contemporaries, such as the two we have already mentioned, he was still a man of considerable initiative and undeniable personal courage, who had probably been a pirate long before he came

into prominence as second-in-command to the celebrated Charles Vane. The latter, unlike Rackam, had evaded the formality of accepting the King's pardon, and was roving the seas in command of a brigantine when an incident occurred, of which Rackam took full advantage. Sighting a French man-of-war, Vane had refused, probably very wisely, to attack her, but had been accused on those grounds by a large portion of his crew, headed by Rackam, of cowardice. As a result Vane was deposed and Rackam elected captain in his place, Vane being given a small captured sloop and a few men with whom to make his departure. This was in November, 1718, after which Rackam and his new command proceeded to operate among the West Indian islands till the end of the year.

Here he was successful in capturing several vessels, spent a leisurely Christmas in a secluded hiding-place, and early in the New Year took a vessel laden with Newgate convicts for the West Indian plantations. From thence he sailed to Bermuda, where he seized a couple of ships homeward bound from Carolina and New England, and being in need of re-fitting, brought them back with him to the Bahamas, where their pitch, tar, and stores would, he argued, be invaluable to him. He stayed for some time here—rather too long, in fact, for Captain Woodes Rogers learned of his presence, and sending an armed sloop, captured the two prizes, though Rackam himself succeeded in escaping. He then went to Cuba, where he seems to have established a sort of home for himself, and where it is probable that Anne Bonny may have been waiting for him, since it was to Cuba, some time previously, that he had taken her for the birth of their first child. Whether Mary Read had by this time also become a part of his crew is uncertain,

but in Anne Bonny we have the third figure in the drama that was now approaching, and we must again turn back for a moment in order to trace the steps by which her lot had been cast in with Rackam's.

Born near Cork, in Ireland, and like Mary an illegitimate child, being the daughter of a servant girl employed in the house of her father, who was an attorney of some standing. To this girl, however, Anne's father was so attached that when his wife left him, herself apparently not wholly guiltless, he lived with her openly and lavished the greatest care and affection on the little girl who was to become Rackam's fellow pirate. But the position was obviously an unsatisfactory one, especially from the professional point of view, and after a few years he decided to emigrate, sailing to South Carolina, where he at first practised law, afterwards engaging in commerce, and presently purchasing himself a plantation. Here Anne's mother died, and Anne herself, described as "of a fierce and courageous temper," kept house for him and quickly asserted herself as a young woman of exceptional vigour. It is at any rate on record that on one occasion she so attacked a young man who had insulted her that he was obliged to take to his bed, where he remained ill for some weeks.

Her father was now a wealthy man, and she was the pride of his life. But she was destined, like Mary Read, to become a figure of tragedy, and presently, without her father's consent, she married a penniless young sailor, to whom her father had wisely enough objected. Indeed, it seems certain that he had chiefly courted Anne on account of her presumed financial prospects, and when her father turned her out of doors, he appears to have made no effort to conceal his disappointment, though he took her away with him to New Providence. This

Ann Bonny *and* Mary Read *convicted of Piracy Nov^r 28^th 1720 at a Court of Vice Admiralty held at* S^t Jago de la Vega *in y^e Island of Jamaica.*

To face p. 96.

was probably before Woodes Rogers had taken matters in hand, and when it was still the hot-bed of every kind of lawlessness. It was here that poor Anne first met and became attracted by the dashing adventurer John Rackam. How long she hesitated we do not know, but eventually she decided to elope with him, and in due course they disappeared together, Anne accompanying him in man's disguise. Indeed she never seems to have companioned him at sea otherwise than secretly and in masculine attire, and when it became clear that she was to have a child he placed her with his friends in Cuba. Afterwards she joined him again, and may possibly have been with him on the cruise which we have just described, although it seems more probable that during this venture with Vane she had remained in Rackam's shore retreat.

It was at any rate to Cuba that, having eluded Rogers, Rackam next made his way, and here an incident occurred that affords an excellent illustration of his habitually reckless though resourceful character. For just as he had lingered, both too long and too carelessly, in the neighbourhood of Captain Woodes Rogers, he now found himself surprised, as he was making ready for sea again, by a Spanish man-of-war. With the Spaniard was a captured English sloop, and the former at once opened fire; and it was only Rackam's position in a narrow channel, half protected by an island, that saved him from destruction. Bottled up, however, he was apparently at the Spaniard's mercy, and when darkness fell, the Spanish commander had his ship warped into the channel in order to make sure of destroying Rackam the next morning. But Rackam was well accustomed to tight places, and in the dead of night he lowered one of his boats, placed his crew in her, and with muffled oars,

rounded the island unseen by the Spaniards. Here he found the English prize anchored a little way out, quickly boarded her, taking her by surprise, and threatened the Spanish prize crew with instant death if they should attempt resistance or make a sound. He then slipped cable and made out to sea, leaving the Spanish man-of-war to waste a considerable amount of valuable ammunition the next morning on the empty ship which he left behind.

Once more he had escaped, though again by the skin of his teeth, and it is not until August, 1720, that we again hear of him, when he was apparently in somewhat poor circumstances and running "at low game," on account of the smallness of his crew. Of this crew both Anne Bonny and Mary Read were now members, and it was some time before this that Mary Read's identity had been discovered by Anne. Indeed the latter had been so attracted by Mary's personal appearance that she had given Rackam considerable cause for jealousy, as well as placing Mary in a somewhat awkward position for more reasons than one. For while Rackam was swearing to cut Mary's throat if Anne continued to have anything more to do with her, a young sailor had been forcibly recruited by the pirates, with whom Mary herself had fallen deeply in love. When Anne revealed her sex, therefore, to Mary, the latter saw no alternative but to make a reciprocal confidence, and, under promise of the strictest secrecy, which he seems to have kept, Rackam was also informed of the true state of affairs. Meanwhile, Mary had made a similar revelation to the object of her affections, and in the absence of any possible marriage ceremony, they had plighted their troth with a solemnity which, she afterwards said, she had regarded as equally sacred.

It was an assertion in full keeping with the

strange code of this remarkable woman, and as a further instance of this, may be adduced an incident recounted of the earlier days of this new companionship. Another member of the crew had quarrelled for some reason with the man whom Mary now regarded as her legitimate husband, and after the usual pirate custom, the quarrel was to be settled ashore with cutlass and pistol. According to the accepted standard this was the only courageous solution, and deeply as Mary feared for her lover's life, she would not have had him evade it by any means to which a taint of cowardice could afterwards cling. On the other hand, the risk of losing him in such a way was more than she could face, and after brooding over the whole affair, she resolved to cut the Gordian knot in her own entirely original fashion. To the other men she was still, of course, but an ordinary fellow sailor, and it was in this capacity that she now picked a quarrel with the man who was to fight her husband. A further duel was consequently arranged, and Mary took care to have it timed before the appointment already made with her husband. At the chosen rendezvous they accordingly met, and Mary conserved both her ideals of honour and her affection by killing her opponent in fair fight and returning unscathed to her lover.

But her stormy career, as well as the drama in which with Anne Bonny she had played her part, was now drawing to its inevitable close, though a few odd successes were still to come to them. Thus in the beginning of September, they captured seven or eight fishing boats in the neighbourhood of Harbour Island, from which they took nets and tackle, valued at the trial as being worth £10. They then made their way to the French portion of the island of Hispaniola, where they landed and

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seized some cattle, together with a couple of Frenchmen who were "hunting wild hogs in the evening." These two men they compelled to accompany them, and secured a couple of sloops on their way back to Jamaica, from which they took "tackle and apparel" to the value of £1,000. That was on October Ist, and on the 17th, near Porto Maria Bay, on the north coast of Jamaica, they captured the schooner of a Captain Thomas Spenlow, who had been plundered by pirates only a few months before. From him they took "Fifty Rolls of Tobacco and nine Bags of Pimento," and kept him in custody for forty-eight hours before finally letting him go.

Meanwhile, however, the Governor of Jamaica, Sir Nicholas Lawes, was preparing to take a hand in the game. For some time he had been receiving bitter complaints from the scattered planters in the north of the island of the depredations of the pirates, who among other things were robbing them of their slaves. He was also anxious to induce more people to settle on this side of the island, and consequently decided to take immediate and forcible steps to place the north coast under proper supervision. For this purpose he chose Captain Jonathan Barnet, described by a contemporary medical historian as "a known and experienced Stout Brisk Man," and provided him with an armed sloop and a commission to keep up a regular patrol of the island.

When news of Rackam's latest capture was brought to Port Royal, therefore—and he had taken yet another vessel while Spenlow was still in his custody—Captain Barnet immediately set sail, accompanying a Cuba-bound merchant vessel. Rounding the island, it was in the neighbourhood of its westernmost point, Point Negril, that the pirates were first sighted, but it was not until ten o'clock at

night that Captain Barnet came within hailing distance. A voice then replied that the vessel was under the command of Captain John Rackam of Cuba, whereupon Captain Barnet promptly demanded that he should strike to the King of England. The voice then replied that they would "strike no strikes," and Rackam's vessel opened fire, Barnet at once responding with a broadside that brought an immediate request for quarter. It was a poor resistance, and indeed it was afterwards said that only Mary Read and Anne were on deck, and that Mary, in her indignation, had fired at the pusillanimous crew, killing one and wounding another. She seems to have denied this herself, although it would have been in keeping with her general character and the description of her and Anne Bonny given by one of the witnesses at the subsequent trial. This, according to the official précis, forwarded by Sir Nicholas Lawes in the following June to the Lords Commissioners of Trade, was one Dorothy Thomas, who had been captured a few days previously in a small "canoe," which the pirates had plundered. Claiming to have penetrated their disguise, she said that they were wearing "men's Jackets and long Trowzers, and Handkerchiefs tied about their Heads; and that each of them had a Machet and Pistol in their Hands," their language being of the most violent description.

Mary appears stoutly to have maintained that her lover was innocent, having become a member of the crew only under compulsion, and the court, we are told, accepted this view and allowed him to go free. But Mary herself was not so fortunate, for while there were many who had "compassion" for her, the court had no alternative, in view of the evidence before them, but to sentence both her and

Anne Bonny to be hanged. This was ten days after Rackam and his associates had been similarly sentenced, but both the women were found to be expectant mothers, and their executions were accordingly postponed. Neither would have feared the gallows, but Mary died in prison, a not uncommon fate in a Jamaican prison of the period, while Anne Bonny passes out of history to an unrecorded end. It seems almost certain, however, that she was not hanged and that, after two or three postponements, she was ultimately set free.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN CHARLES VANE

It will be remembered that one of the chief steps taken by the English government to suppress the West Atlantic piracy of the early eighteenth century was the occupation of the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, the chief pirate rendezvous in those waters. For that purpose, as we have seen, Captain Woodes Rogers with a couple of men-of-war was dispatched to the island in the year 1718, armed in the first place with the King's pardon for all who would take the oath of loyalty and undertake to reform their ways, and in the second with authority to suppress sea-robbery to the full extent of his powers. We have also seen that most of the pirates —at any rate in the formal sense—took advantage of the offered amnesty, and that these included such characters as Teach or Blackbeard, Major Stede Bonnet and many another hardly less famous. The majority of these probably took the oath of allegiance with their tongues in their cheeks, and a considerable number were soon at their old trade again. But there was one experienced practitioner who entirely declined to accept the pardon except upon his own terms, and this exception was that same Charles Vane to whom we have already had occasion to refer. It was he, as we have noted, under whom John Rackam, the companion of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, gained some of his earlier experiences;

and it was he whom the gallant Colonel Rhett of South Carolina turned aside to chase—as it proved in vain—on his way to capture Stede Bonnet. In fact, in his own beat, as it were, the coast-line of the North American colonies, Jamaica, and the Bay of Honduras, Charles Vane was as familiar and feared a character as any of his more widely-known contemporaries.

Nor was he disposed to follow the herd in their surrender to Captain Woodes Rogers, and finding himself in the harbour of New Providence with an appreciable amount of recently acquired treasure, he decided to open negotiations on his own account with this quite unnecessary and unwelcome newcomer. He therefore sent him a letter stating that he would only consent to surrender if he could dispose of his spoil in any way he liked, and as he received no reply to this, he decided to bid Rogers defiance and make for the open sea unencumbered with a pardon. For this purpose he took a sloop belonging to one of his men named Yeates, and with a crew of ninety men made a dash for it, helped, as it happened, by the geography of the harbour. For the entrance to this was divided by a small island into two definite channels, one of which remained commanded by Captain Woodes Rogers' men-of-war. Having first fired his prizes, therefore, Yeates headed for the free channel, discharged a parting volley at the surprised men-of-war, and successfully got to sea, leaving his more amenable or subtler fellows to make their terms with the government's representative. A couple of days later he secured himself a consort in the shape of a captured Barbados sloop, and in this he placed Yeates with twenty-five hands, taking another merchantman two days afterwards. It had been a propitious start for his next campaign. He had satisfied his pride and

outwitted Rogers. And he accordingly repaired to an out-of-the-way island to divide his new plunder and celebrate the event in customary fashion.

That was in the summer of 1718, and having rested and refreshed his men, Vane next beat his way south and south-east along the coast of the island of Hispaniola. Here or hereabouts he secured his next victim, a Spanish vessel on passage to Havana in Cuba, plundering her and setting her on fire, and casting her crew adrift in one of their own boats. His chief needs at the moment, however, were provisions and a reinforcement of necessary marine stores, and these he presently obtained from a captured brigantine in the neighbourhood of the island of St. Christopher. He then turned north towards the North American colonies, and in August was operating off the coast of South Carolina, taking his toll of that hard-pressed little community but a few weeks after Blackbeard and Bonnet had held up the citizens of Charlestown. He seized several English vessels in the North American colonial trade, as well as a ship hailing from Barbados under the command of Captain Dill, another from Antigua under the command of Captain Cook, a vessel from the Dutch island of Curaçao under the command of Captain Richards, and a brigantine from the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa with a cargo of ninety negro slaves, under the command of Captain Thompson. None of these vessels was kept by him and the negroes were transferred to the sloop of which his subordinate Yeates was in charge.

As so frequently happened, however, in these pirate fraternities, there had been for some time a growing ill-feeling between Yeates and his commander, as well as between the crews of the two vessels. Little incidents, in which there had been a

difference of opinion, had become magnified, and Yeates had already made up his mind to part company with Vane on the first convenient opportunity. With Captain Thompson's negroes on board, and being in the vicinity of a civilized community, as well as upon a coast with many natural advantages, Yeates decided that his moment had come, and accordingly began to manœuvre for departure. The two pirate vessels were now some thirty miles south of Charlestown, and in the neighbourhood of the North Edisto River, and it was up this river, guarded as it was by a bar, that Yeates decided to take his vessel. But Vane, already probably somewhat suspicious as to his chief officer's intentions, quickly divined what was in Yeates' mind, and furiously angry at once set sail in chase of his vanishing colleague. He quickly gained on him, but Yeates' start proved just sufficient to carry him into safety, and he successfully crossed the bar before Vane could overhaul him, and fired a parting broadside at his late chief. Having made his way up the river, he then sent messengers to Governor Johnson of Charlestown, offering to surrender with all his hands and his valuable contingent of negroes on condition that the Governor would allow him to take advantage of the King's pardon. To this Johnson agreed, and a few days later the pirates entered the town, Captain Thompson, to his great satisfaction, receiving his lost negroes back again.

Meanwhile, Vane had been wrathfully cruising outside the bar of the North Edisto River waiting for Yeates to reappear, and had taken, during his vigil, two more vessels homeward bound to England from Charlestown. News of Vane had also, during this time, been brought into the little capital of South Carolina by the various captains whose ships he had plundered, and Colonel Rhett, whom, as we

have already seen, was fitting out the two vessels with which he afterwards captured Stede Bonnet in the Cape Fear River, decided to put out in chase of him. Vane was too old a bird, however, not to have realized that some measures of retaliation would probably be taken against him, and had allowed tidings to escape to the effect that he was proposing to cruise southward. Sailing on September 15th, Rhett therefore missed him, as we have already recorded, Vane having made his way north towards the New England colonies, where he next meant to operate.

While Rhett had thus given him up and was following in his wake on the resumed task of hunting down and destroying Bonnet, Vane was well on his way towards the scene of his next recorded capture. But in the interval there occurred a picturesque incident which is perhaps worth recording, for as he approached Ocracoke Inlet, some little distance south of Cape Hatteras, he fell in with his even more notorious fellow-pirate, Captain Teach or Blackbeard, and the two saluted each other with formal salvoes of guns, afterwards engaging in mutual courtesies, not to say orgies, for several days. Vane then pushed farther north, and on October 23rd, captured a small brigantine, bound from Jamaica to the port of Salem on the Delaware River. This he plundered and let go, and for some further weeks met with no other success, his next encounter being with the French man-of war, to which we have already referred in the story of the two women pirates. For it was as a result of this encounter that John Rackam, Anne Bonny's future lover, succeeded in obtaining command of Vane's vessel after having deposed his chief, although in all the circumstances, Vane's disputed conduct on this occasion was probably dictated by the sounder

judgment. Indeed the incident might have had a disastrous issue for all the pirates concerned, for after confidently approaching the Frenchman in the belief that she was a harmless merchantman, they suddenly found themselves in the presence of a very powerfully armed man-of-war, who promptly received them with a broadside. Vane at once went about, whereupon the Frenchman gave chase, and it was then that Rackam, who was apparently Yeates' successor, led the section of the crew that wished to come and engage the pursuer. For though it was true, as Rackam admitted, that "she had more Guns and a greater weight of Mettal," yet he was all for making alongside and endeavouring to board her when, as he said, "the best Boys would carry the day."

Hardened old pirate as he was, however, Vane refused to be over-persuaded, pointing out, we are told, "that it was too rash and desperate an Enterprise, the Man of War appearing to be twice their Force; and that their Brigantine might be sunk by her before they could reach on board." For the moment, too, he carried his point, the Frenchman being safely eluded. But after a council of war the next day he was formally found guilty of cowardice and set adrift in a small boat with the fifteen members of the crew who had taken his part, including one Robert Deal, one of his chief officers. In view of his past exploits, however, and no doubt of a certain lingering affection for their old leader, Vane was given an ample supply of provisions together with some ammunition, so that, if he cared, he could make a fresh start elsewhere. This he resolved to do, and accordingly made his way south again towards the Bay of Honduras, eventually taking three small ships off the north-west coast of Jamaica, one of which he kept for a consort, while

from all of them he recruited likely hands for his service.

The end of the year was now approaching, and on the 15th December, Vane with his augmented company fell in with an armed vessel, the *Pearl*, of Jamaica, under Captain Rowling. As the approaching pirate vessel showed no colours, Rowling opened fire upon them. But when Vane at once responded, at the same time breaking the Black Flag from his mast, Rowling surrendered, and his vessel was carried off to a small island safely out of reach of possible investigators. On the way to this island Vane captured yet another vessel, which he also took with him, the spoils being divided, according to his usual procedure when his destination was reached. Here he remained lurking in safe obscurity till February of the following year, probably in entire ignorance of the fate that had meanwhile overtaken Blackbeard, with whom he had so lately been exchanging courtesies. In February, however, he decided to take the high seas again, and with one of his prizes as consort, set out upon the voyage that Fate had determined was to prove his last.

For hardly had he put to sea when he ran into one of the cyclones that occasionally devastate these West Indian islands, and was soon separated from his consort and driving helplessly before the wind. Finally he was driven upon a small uninhabited island, where his little ship was broken to pieces upon the shore, most of the men being drowned and Vane himself barely escaping with his life. But he had already escaped from too many tight corners not to make the most of every reprieve, and for some weeks he succeeded in keeping himself alive, thanks to the convenient visit to the island of a handful of poor fishermen in search of turtles. Moreover, by

another chance that seemed at first equally fortunate, a Jamaica trader put into the island for water, and proved to belong to an old acquaintance of his, a sturdy buccaneer named Captain Holford.

But between the buccaneer and the pirate such as Vane there was a distinct if somewhat narrow gulf, and Holford, knowing his man, proved less amenable than Vane had hoped. "Charles," he seems to have said frankly, "I shan't have you aboard my ship unless I carry you a Prisoner; for I shall have you caballing with my Men, knock me on the Head, and run away with my Ship a pyrating"—a surmise that seems, on the face of it, not to have been improbable, although Vane strenuously denied it. But Holford was not to be shaken and pointed out to Vane that "He might easily find a Way to get off, if he had a Mind to it," adding, "I am now going down the Bay and shall return hither in about a Month; and if I find you upon the island when I come back, I'll carry you to Jamaica and hang you."

"But how can I get away?" replied Vane.

"Are there no Fishermen's Dories," said Holford, "upon the Beach? Can't you take one of them?"

"What," said Vane properly shocked, "would you have me steal a Dory then?"

But as regards Holford, at any rate, Vane had come to the end of his tether.

"Do you make it a matter of Conscience," he said, "to steal a Dory, when you have been a common Robber and Pyrate, stealing Ships and Cargoes, and plundering all Mankind that fell in your Way? Stay there and be d—d, if you are so squeamish," whereupon the ex-buccaneer, we are told, sailed away.

Even then, however, Vane might have succeeded in escaping, for a few days later a second vessel put into the island, homeward bound for Jamaica. The

captain of this had never met Vane, who now represented himself under another name as a poor ship-wrecked sailor only too anxious to prove his honest worth in return for a passage. The captain agreed to take him; Vane went aboard, and the vessel continued upon its way, when by the most ironical chance of all, the captain met an old friend, also homeward bound. This was none other than Holford, who was invited on board to dinner, and who chanced, as he went by, to glance down into the hold, where he caught sight of Charles Vane virtuously at work. Calling his host, he pointed him out, giving a brief summary of Vane's immediate past. It was ultimately arranged that Holford should take him over and carry him as a prisoner to Jamaica. Holford accordingly sent his mate, suitably armed, and a stout boat's crew to fetch the unfortunate pirate, who was then placed in irons on board Holford's vessel and safely lodged in prison at Port Royal. Here, not long before, Vane's principal subordinate, Robert Deal, had been caught and hanged, and in due course, Charles Vane, after being tried and found guilty, paid his long overdue penalty.

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTAIN ENGLAND

With Blackbeard, Bonnet, 'Anne Bonny, Mary Read, and Charles Vane we have been concerned chiefly with the pirates' trade as practised in the West Atlantic and among the West Indian islands. But with Edward England we turn for the first time to the hardly less popular sphere of the west coast of Africa and thence to the Indian Ocean and the familiar haunts of Captains Avery and Kidd. Nevertheless, as was almost invariably the case, England, like his contemporaries Blackbeard and Vane, embarked on piracy in American waters; and although his early life is wrapped in obscurity, when he appeared as a pirate in the Gulf of Guinea, it was as a seaman of considerable experience, who had sailed either from the West Indies or some New England port. Indeed, according to one account, he had been the mate of a respectable Jamaica merchantman, which had been taken by a pirate known as Captain Winter, and throughout his career he seems to have retained a standard of conduct contrasting favourably with that of most of his colleagues. Thus we are told by one historian, "he had a great deal of good Nature, and did not want for Courage; he was not avaricious, and always averse to the ill Usage Prisoners received;

He would have been contented with Moderate Plunder, and less mischievous Pranks, could his Company have been brought to the same Temper, but he was generally overrul'd, and as he was engaged in that abominable Society he was obliged to be a Partisan in all their vile Actions."[2]

It was as a man of this type then that he appeared off the coast of West Africa somewhere in the year 1718 as one of an enlarging group of pirates that included figures like Plantain, Taylor, and Howel Davis, who were later to attain considerable individual notoriety, and some of whom had certainly left New England in a sloop known as the *Terrible*, under the command of one Captain John Williams. According to one chronicler, England was one of these, although according to another, he had crossed the Atlantic in a command of his own. But whichever was the case, he was soon one of the principal characters in the quickly growing pirate fleet and figuring as the elected commander of successive captured vessels. Indeed in such numbers were these latter taken, and so frequently did the various pirate leaders transfer themselves from one ship to another, that it is hard to follow, and impossible to record accurately, their individual commands at this particular period, though the ships captured—in so far as they were British—were most of them of no great significance. This was probably a reflection of the comparative ill-success that had always attended British West African commercial enterprise, although the coast of Guinea still remained, as in the days of the Tudors, the chief source of labour supplies for the New World colonies.

Thus, when the Royal Africa Company had been established in 1672, after a century's more or less desultory individual trading, there were only

three stations of any importance in English hands, namely James Fort, Sierra Leone, and Cape Coast Castle. Thirty years later the Company was bankrupt, but although it had been reconstructed some six years before this voyage of England's, it was still far from flourishing from the standpoint of legitimate commerce. A good deal of irregular trade, however, was conducted with the west coast of Africa not only by individual English merchants and smaller groups of speculators, but by the Dutch, French, and Portuguese, all of whom had their particular "forts" or special spheres of influence.

Described then as having command of the *Onslow*, an English vessel only captured after a very stiff fight off the coast of Gambia, England is also stated to have taken and appropriated for his own uses another English vessel, the *Pearl*, and it is, of course, possible that during his rise to fame he was in command of both. At any rate he is said to have re-christened the *Pearl* as the *Royal James*, and to have cruised successfully during the winter of 1718 and the first two or three months of the following year in the neighbourhood of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands, where he captured and plundered several vessels. Then early in 1719, he appears to have returned to the Gulf of Guinea, where, according to one narrator, he captured a series of vessels, the list in which is instructive as throwing a sidelight on the nature of English West African trade in the early eighteenth century.

Thus on March 25th, we are told, he took a small vessel, the *Eagle*, bound from Cork to Jamaica, carrying six guns and seventeen men, and having plundered her, let her go, recruiting seven of her crew for his own company. On May 26th he captured and burned the *Charlotte* of London,

a vessel carrying eight guns and a crew of eighteen men, thirteen of whom became pirates. On the following day he captured three more vessels, the *Sarah* of London, bound to Virginia, carrying eighteen men and four guns, the *Bentworth* of Bristol, a twelve-gun ship with a crew of thirty, and the *Buck* bound from Gambia to Maryland. Of these vessels he destroyed the *Bentworth*, allowing the *Buck* and *Sarah* to go free after he had plundered them, while from their combined crews he recruited seventeen pirates to add to his own numbers. On May 28th he captured the *Carteret* of London, a vessel containing eighteen men and four guns, persuading three of her crew to join him, and then burnt her. The next day he captured the *Mercury*, also of London, a vessel containing four guns and eighteen men, and this he retained, adding her to his fleet under the new name of the *Queen Anne's Revenge*. He then took and burned, on June 17th, the *Coward* of London, a small vessel with a crew of thirteen, four of whom agreed to become pirates, and ten days later took the *Elizabeth and Katherine* of Barbados, which he also added to his fleet, having re-christened her the *Flying King*. Soon afterwards, we are told, this vessel, together with the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, broke away from his command, sailing for the West Indies and the coast of Brazil, where they were eventually chased by a Portuguese man-of-war. The *Queen Anne's Revenge* succeeded in escaping, but the *Flying King* was driven ashore, thirty-eight of her crew being hanged, thirty-two of whom were English.

Meanwhile, England, continuing his wiser policy, remained in West African waters, his next capture being the *Peterborough* of Bristol, which he decided to keep and eventually called the *Victory*—

a vessel that was presently to loom very large, and with a very sinister reputation, in the maritime world of the Indian Ocean. In company with his new *Victory* and with a Dutch vessel, taken after a fierce fight, and re-christened the *Fancy*—a vessel that England now took as his flagship—he then proceeded to Cape Castle, in the neighbourhood of which he found and attacked two more English vessels, which succeeded, however, in running under the shelter of the Fort. This opened fire so vigorously that though England resorted to the expedient of using fire-ships, he was obliged to abandon this enterprise, sailing next to Whydah in the Bight of Benin. But here he found himself forestalled by an almost equally enterprising and celebrated French pirate, Captain la Bouche, and accordingly kept along the coast till he found a suitable harbour where he could careen and clean his vessels, consider his future, and give his men a necessary change of routine and opportunity for relaxation.

For some weeks the pirates seem to have kept high revel, drinking hard and making mistresses of the negro women, and incidentally raiding the country behind them and setting on fire one of the principal native towns. Here, too, there seem to have arisen differences of opinion, more or less amicable, as to the future course of operations, and another division of forces took place, the majority deciding to follow England and Taylor, but a substantial number breaking away under one Bartholomew Roberts, who was soon destined, as we shall see, to achieve a very considerable fame of his own. The fleet was therefore divided, the *Terrible* being unfit for further service, and England with the *Victory* and *Fancy*, and possibly a smaller vessel, began his long voyage round the Cape of

Good Hope. This he accomplished safely, although illness broke out on board, and arriving off the southernmost point of Madagascar, he landed his invalids on the shores of St. Augustine's Bay.

This was a poor harbour, although to the south of it there was a road in which the anchorage was good, and it was here, as we have already seen, that in the reign of Charles I, a tragic attempt had been made to form a permanent English colony or plantation. Nor was it any kinder to Captain England than it had proved to its original settlers, nearly all of his stricken men dying within a short time of being landed. He was able to obtain, however, fruit and vegetables and fresh water from the natives, and to make such repairs as had become necessary to his vessels after beating round the Cape.

But from now onwards, for the next few months, the accounts of his proceedings differ rather materially. Thus, according to one narrator, he at once proceeded to cross the Indian Ocean and operate off the Malabar coast in south-west India, while according to another, his first objective was the Mozambique coast of East Africa where he obtained further provisions, and whence he sailed to the little island of Johanna, which was destined to be the scene of one of his best-known exploits. This was a small island about half-way between the north coast of Madagascar and the mainland of Africa, and was a frequent point of call for homeward-bound vessels from India to England or North America. Here he lay for some time, afterwards making his way, as had Avery and Kidd before him, to the mouth of the Red Sea, where he took a rich prize belonging to a Mohammedan trader. With this, according to our second

historian, he then made his way back to Madagascar, finding an anchorage off St. Mary's Island on the eastern coast—the same island upon which Avery, some twenty-five years previously, had fortified himself. He sorted out his plunder, leaving behind him all that it would be difficult to market, and having destroyed the vessel, which was of no use to him, he disposed of the rest of his goods, as profitably as possible. He then returned to Johanna, himself in command of the *Fancy* and with the *Victory* in the charge of one Taylor, a very truculent but powerful subordinate.

It was now somewhat late in the summer of 1729 and there were lying in the harbour of the little island, two English East Indiamen, who had put in here on their way from England to Bombay. These were the *Cassandra* under Captain Mackray, and the *Greenwich* under Captain Kirby, while a third vessel, an Ostender, was also in company with them in the bay. All three were well armed and indeed had been contemplating an attack upon the French pirate Captain la Bouche, who was reported to have been stranded upon a neighbouring island. This then was the position when, at about eight o'clock in the morning of August 17th, England and Taylor, in the *Fancy* and *Victory*, made their appearance before Johanna. It was a dramatic encounter, since the other three vessels had been preparing for another action; and in Captain Mackray the *Cassandra* was commanded by one of the most skilful and courageous seamen in the employ of the East India Company. He did not fail to welcome the two pirates in the most vigorous fashion. Unfortunately, however, he was poorly supported, and no better account of the fight can be given than that contained in his own letter home, written three or four months later. Having finally

ascertained the true character of the two vessels which were now approaching, he immediately went on board the *Greenwich*, where everybody seemed, he wrote, very diligent in preparations for engaging, and where he left Captain Kirby with mutual promises to stand by each other.

"I then unmoor'd," he wrote, "got under Sail, and brought two Boats a-head to row in close to the *Greenwich;* but he being open to a Valley and a Breeze, made the best of his Way from me; which an Ostender in our Company of 22 guns, seeing, did the same, though the Captain had promised heartily to engage with us, and I believe would have been as good as his Word, if Captain Kirby had kept his. About Half an Hour after Twelve, I called several times to the *Greenwich* to bear down to our Assistance, and fir'd Shot at him, but to no Purpose. For tho' we did not doubt but he would join us, because when he got about a League from us, he brought his Ship to, and look'd on, yet both he and the Ostender basely deserted us, and left us engaged with barbarous and unhuman Enemies, with their black and bloody Flags hanging over us, without the least appearance of escaping being cut to Pieces. But God in his good Providence, determin'd otherwise; for notwithstanding their Superiority, we engag'd 'em both about three Hours, during which, the biggest received some Shot betwixt Wind and Water, which made her keep off a little to stop her Leaks. The other endeavoured all she could to board us, by rowing with her Oars, being within half a Ship's length of us above an Hour, but by good Fortune we shot all her Oars to Pieces, which prevented them, and by consequence saved our Lives.

"About Four o'Clock, most of the Officers and

Men posted on the Quarter Deck being killed and wounded, the largest Ship making up to us with all Diligence, being still within a Cable's Length of us, often giving us a Broadside, and no hopes of Captain Kirby's coming to our Assistance, we endeavoured to run ashore; and tho' we drew four Foot Water more than the Pyrate it pleased God that he stuck fast on a higher Ground than we happily fell in with; so was disappointed a second time from boarding us. Here we had a more violent Engagement than before. All my Officers, and most of my Men behaved with unexpected Courage; and as we had a considerable Advantage by having a Broadside to his Bow, we did him great Damage, so that had Captain Kirby come in then, I believe we should have taken both, for we had one of them sure; but the other Pyrate (who was still firing at us) seeing the *Greenwich* did not offer to assist us, he supplied his Consort with three Boats full of fresh Men. About Five in the Evening the *Greenwich* stood clear away to Sea, leaving us struggling hard for Life in the very Jaws of Death; which the other Pyrate, that was afloat, seeing, got a-warp out, and was hauling under our Stern; by which time many of my Men being killed and wounded, and no Hopes left us from being all murder'd by enraged barbarous Conquerors, I order'd all that could, to get into the Long-Boat under the Cover of the Smoak of our Guns; so that with what some did in Boats, and others by swimming, most of us that were able got ashoar by Seven o'Clock. When the Pyrates came aboard, they cut three of our wounded Men to Pieces. I with a few of my People, made what haste I could to the King's-Town, twenty-five Miles from us, where I arrived next Day, almost dead with Fatigue and Loss of Blood, having

been sorely wounded in the Head by a Musket Ball.

"At this Town I heard that the Pyrates had offered ten thousand Dollars to the Country People to bring me in, which many of them would have accepted, only they knew the King and all his chief People were in my Interest. Meantime, I caused a Report to be spread, that I was dead of my Wounds, which much abated their Fury. About ten Days after, being pretty well recovered, and hoping the Malice of our Enemies was nigh over, I began to consider the dismal Condition we were reduced to, being in a Place where we had no Hopes of Getting a Passage home, all of us in a manner naked, not having had Time to get our Shirts or a Pair of Shoes."

But the gallant captain was not to be daunted, and at last decided upon the apparently desperate measure of himself interviewing his late conquerors. "Having obtained Leave," he wrote, "to go on Board the Pyrates, and a Promise of Safety, several of the Chief of them knew me, and some of them had sailed with me, which I found of great Advantage; because, notwithstanding their Promise, some of them would have cut me, and all that would not enter with them, to Pieces, had it not been for the chief Captain, Edward England, and some others I knew."

Captain England stood firm, however, in spite of the fact that he had lost nearly a hundred of his men killed and wounded, and it is clear that the character and gallantry of the sturdy East India Company skipper had made a profound impression on him. For after taking over the *Cassandra*—and she was a rich prize having besides her goods, £75,000 in cash on board—he insisted on Captain

Mackray being allowed to make use if he could of his own vessel, the *Fancy*. Thanks to Captain Mackray himself, she had been pretty thoroughly battered. But she was much better than nothing to so resourceful a seaman; and five days after the pirates had left with the *Cassandra* and *Victory* he put to sea in her on his delayed journey to Bombay. Fitted with jury masts and old sails, and with a crew of forty-three men, a couple of passengers and twelve soldiers, he then crossed the Indian Ocean, the voyage, owing to calms and contrary winds, taking forty-eight days, and the water ration having to be reduced to a pint a day per person for all purposes. He eventually arrived safely, considerably to this discomfiture of Captain Kirby, who had spread a very different tale of the fight at Johanna, and who soon afterwards died, it is said, as the result of the shame and discredit that his desertion of the *Cassandra* had brought upon him.

So ended an exploit that soon sent the names of England and Taylor ringing over the Indian Ocean, as had those of Avery and Kidd, although, according to one of his chroniclers, England had soon to pay a heavy price for the leniency he had shown to Mackray. For his subordinate Taylor, now in command of the *Cassandra*, was a man of very different type, a big swaggering brute, whose impulses were almost wholly animal; and he seems not very long afterwards—although this cannot be certainly verified—to have secured most of the suffrages of the pirate company. This, according to Mackray, consisted, when the two vessels left Johanna, of three hundred whites and eighty men of colour; and England is said to have been marooned by them on the island of Mauritius, where he eventually built "a little boat of staves

and old pieces of Deal left there," in which, with three other men, he made his way back to Madagascar.

Whether England was with them or not, the *Cassandra* and *Victory* continued their successful career of assault and plunder, picking up a few small vessels in the neighbourhood of Johanna and among the Laccadive Islands. They then made their way towards Cochin, then in the hands of the Dutch, where they had good reason to suppose that they would be favourably received, and where they hoped to market some of their plunder and re-victual their ships. This having been accomplished successfully, thanks to a discreet intermediary, bearing the name, we are told, of John Trumpet, and a presumably not too exigent governor, they soon afterwards had an extremely narrow escape of being run down and captured. This was at the hands of a fleet that had been hastily assembled by the East India Company authorities at Bombay, and of which the command had very appropriately been given to Captain Mackray. Owing to good fortune, however, in respect of the wind, and under the shelter of darkness, the *Cassandra* and *Victory* succeeded in slipping away, and the Christmas of 1720, we are told, was celebrated by them in a prolonged period of carousing.

They are then said to have gone to Mauritius. But it is certain that in the early months of 1721 they were operating in the region of the Mascarine Islands, a group of small islands to the east of Madagascar. For it was in these waters that they performed a second exploit, which echoed throughout the East, in the capture of the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa. A passenger in a large Portuguese ship of which he was part owner, and which was carrying seventy guns and an

extremely valuable cargo, he had been homeward bound, when, owing to a succession of heavy storms, his vessel had been unable to make the Cape of Good Hope, and had accordingly put back to one of the Mascarines to repair and wait for finer weather. In these circumstances the *Cassandra* and *Victory* found her an easy prey; she was largely dismantled, and with most of her guns ashore, while the Viceroy, who believed the intruders to be English East Indiamen, put off from the island and came aboard them. He was quickly disillusioned, being captured and held to ransom. But in consideration of the loss to him represented by his vessel—and this is alleged to have contained, apart from other treasures, over three million dollars' worth of diamonds—he was allowed to go free after paying two thousand dollars. Soon afterwards another vessel, this time an Ostender, was captured, and also, according to one account, a rich native-owned trading vessel en route from China.

It was now decided to return to Madagascar with their three new prizes, but the Portuguese vessel, which contained among other things two hundred Mozambique negroes, seems to have given them the slip, the pirate prize crew being overcome and the vessel taken to Mozambique, where it was ordered by the Governor to proceed to Goa. The other vessels, however, succeeded in returning safely to the old pirates' haunt in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's Island on the Madagascar coast after what must certainly be considered as one of the most amazingly successful pirate cruises on record. How much the company ultimately profited by it is uncertain; quantities of rare china and beautiful fabrics were afterwards discovered, spoiled by wind and weather, on the neighbouring Madagascar beaches. But even the ordinary members

of the company received, we are told, a share of forty-two diamonds apiece. Meanwhile, tidings of their depredations had been communicated to a small naval squadron, under Commodore Matthews then at the Cape of Good Hope, and consisting of H.M.S. *Lyon*, *Exeter*, *Shoreham*, and *Salisbury*. But once again, by a stroke of good luck, the fleet escaped capture, owing to a message left by Commodore Matthews at St. Augustine's Bay for the *Salisbury*, from whom he had become separated, falling into the hands of one of the pirate commanders who happened to enter the roads soon after the Commodore had left. Nevertheless their career as a united body seems now to have come to an end, some of the pirates deciding to settle in Madagascar, where they quickly established themselves in more or less regal state, while others, including Taylor, drifted away and were no more heard of.

As for England he remained on the island, but appears to have fallen upon evil days, being largely dependent upon the charity of various of his subordinates, who had made friends with the native kings. Later he seems to have attached himself to one of the chief of these, known as King William, at St. Augustine's Bay, but ultimately died at the court of John Plantain, who had by then made himself the most powerful man in the island. Though he was perhaps the only pirate of whom it was recorded that he was beloved by his men, his death is said to have been occasioned " by the severe Stings of his Conscience for his wicked Course of Life, and the Injuries he had done to several by robbing them of their Properties."[1] This was a thing, as one of his historians puts it, " that seldom happens to those sort of Men, who are so hardened in their Impieties, that to outward Appearance they

seldom feel any Remorse." Captain England, on the other hand, he tells us, "seem'd very penitent some time before his Death, and hoped that God would forgive him his Sins, desiring his Companions to leave off that Course of Life."

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN HOWEL DAVIS

ALTHOUGH he owed his entrance into piracy to Captain England, with whose adventures we have already dealt, Howel Davis was a character of a very different type, a light-hearted dare-devil with more than his share of Celtic dash and imagination, and a sense of humour that makes it impossible not to accord him a certain sympathy. Indeed, if he had been given a chance or been bred to the sea in somewhat happier circumstances, he might well have attained high rank among English admirals, and as in the case of so many of these pirates one cannot help deploring the wastage and misuse of so much courage and ingenuity. To say all this, however, is not to excuse the bloodshed and distress for which his subsequent actions made him responsible, and it cannot even be said that he was given no alternative when the career of a pirate was placed before him.

He was mate of a Bristol merchantman, the *Cadogan Snow*, which was captured by the group of pirates operating in the Gulf of Guinea in 1718 under the leadership of England—a vessel in which there had already been trouble necessitating stern action by its commander, Captain Skinner. This had involved depriving certain members of his crew of their wages for disciplinary reasons, the disaffected

men being subsequently shipped by Skinner on to an English man-of-war. Tragically for Skinner, however, they had afterwards escaped, joined some pirates in the West Indies, and when he was brought aboard his captor's vessel, the first person he met was his old boatswain. It was a barbarous age, and Skinner's doom was speedily sealed. After having been fastened to the windlass and pelted with glass bottles, he was whipped round the deck until he fell exhausted, when he was mercifully shot, because on the whole "he had been a good master of his men." That England approved of this cruelty is unlikely in view of his general character, but the event happened in the early days of his command. Many of his men were but little removed from animals, and he probably felt himself unable to deny them the opportunity of revenge that had so dramatically presented itself.

With a characteristic gesture England then made a present of the vessel to the mate, Howel Davis, a gift prompted, according to Davis himself, by England's admiration of his refusal to join the pirates—an explanation that seems, in the light of subsequent events, to have been singularly unlikely. But Davis was, at any rate, given command and allowed to sail away with sealed orders, which were to be opened and read to the crew at an appointed rendezvous. This was done, when the secret orders proved to be a magniloquent deed of gift, ordering Davis to proceed to Brazil, dispose of the remainder of the cargo of the *Cadogan Snow*, and make a fair division amongst all concerned. To Davis's chagrin, however, the crew refused to adopt this course, and instead, clapping him into irons, proceeded to Barbados, to which island some of the cargo had been consigned from England. This was in accordance with the custom of the times,

when the normal trading voyage in these seas was a triangular one, namely from England to West Africa, from West Africa to the West Indies, and from the West Indies home again.

At Barbados Davis was put in prison, and there he remained for some three months, when he was released without trial as no definite act of piracy could be proved against him. But he had become a marked man. Who would give him respectable employment? In the circumstances he decided to make his way to New Providence, the refuge for West Atlantic unfortunates, where he hoped to discover some outlet for his peculiar abilities. But by the time he arrived at the island, Captain Woodes Rogers, the newly appointed governor, was already in charge, and most of its inhabitants, as we have elsewhere recorded, had taken the King's pardon that had just been promulgated. Many of these had done so with a wink—not unobserved probably by Woodes Rogers—and piety being fashionable, Davis did likewise, presently obtaining a position in one of a couple of trading vessels fitted out by Woodes Rogers for legitimate commerce.

These were two small sloops, the *Buck* and the *Mumvil Trader*, and in the former Davis put to sea, a large proportion of the crews of both vessels consisting, as was to have been expected, of recently pardoned pirates. It was this fact, indeed, together with Davis's character, that determined subsequent events, and while at anchor off Martinique, Davis succeeded one night in seizing the *Buck* and making himself her master. He then surprised the *Mumvil Trader* where he found many kindred spirits, robbed her of most of her valuables, and placed on board her such of the two crews as refused to join him in returning to piracy. The coup was speedily completed, but Davis did not instantly assert his

claim to leadership, though he doubtless had a shrewd idea who was best fitted for the rôle. "A Counsel of War," we are told, "was called over a large Bowl of Punch, at which it was proposed to chuse a Commander; the Election was soon over, for it fell upon Davis by a great Majority of legal Pollers, there was no Scrutiny demanded, for all acquiesced in the Choice: As soon as he was possess'd of his Command, he drew up Articles, which were signed and sworn to by himself and the rest, then he made a short speech, the substance of which was a Declaration of War against the Whole World." Davis was a man of imagination, and as Wesley claimed the whole world as his parish, Davis declined to set any boundaries to the sphere on which he was entering. But in view of the odds he was up against it is hard to deny him a certain tribute of admiration, and thenceforward, throughout his short career, he showed a courage worthy of a better cause.

He had under him only a little vessel—not very much larger than a fishing smack—but a handy little craft and an exceptionally fast sailer, and he decided, first of all, to find some safe harbour, where he could put her in as good order as his means allowed. Accordingly, with his thirty men, none of whom was a carpenter, he made his way to the island of Cuba, where he found a small inlet on the east coast, known as Coxon's Hole. For tactical purposes, this was an excellent rendezvous, since its narrow entrance could be held against a fleet, and here with some difficulty he careened and cleaned his ship preparatory to taking the high seas. He then set sail again, cruising in the neighbourhood of the island of Hispaniola, and the first ship sighted proved to be a French vessel carrying twelve guns.

This was a tough proposition for Davis, with his handful of men, but his provisions were becoming very short, and he therefore decided to attack her. It was a risky adventure, but his courage was rewarded. He succeeded in capturing her, and sent twelve of his men on board to secure her plunder. While they were taking possession, another sail was seen far to windward. The stranger proved to be another French vessel carrying twenty-four guns, and with a crew of sixty-eight men. This arrival suggested an even more formidable task, but Davis decided to attempt it, although most of his men were strong in trying to dissuade him from an adventure which seemed to promise nothing but inevitable disaster. But the wily Welshman had already evolved a scheme whereby his wit was to make up for his weakness. He silenced his crew's objections, imbuing them with his own confidence. Together with his new prize, therefore, he made towards the stranger, but his own ship being the faster sailer, it was alone that he eventually overtook her, with his depleted band of eighteen men. He then ran up his Black Flag, and demanded the vessel's surrender, to which the Frenchman, amazed at his impudence, forcibly replied to the effect that any surrendering would have to be done by Davis, and that very promptly.

But Davis had laid his plans well, and pointed out to her that his "consort" was fast approaching, and swinging round let fly a broadside to lend emphasis to his point. Meanwhile, acting under his orders, the twelve men on the first prize had brought all their prisoners up on deck, dressed in white shirts, to lend a semblance of numbers, and had run up a dirty tarpaulin to play the part of a second Black Flag. Thoroughly deceived by this

show of apparent force, the second Frenchman decided to surrender, and her captain and twenty of her hands were brought to Davis's vessel, where he placed them in irons for his own security. He then sent four of his men over to his alleged "consort," having first impressively called upon her captain to send a crew into his second prize, and gave them secret orders to transfer all men and ammunition from prize number one to prize number two. But his manœuvres were not at an end, for the remaining prisoners from prize number two were despatched to the now unarmed number one; and having thus secured himself, he kept both prizes in company for the next couple of days. During this time, however, he found that the second Frenchman was almost as "dull a Sailer" as the first, and having spiked her guns, and removed all her ammunition and everything else that seemed of any value to his own vessel, the little *Buck*, he let both his prizes go after first having restored to them their respective officers and men. What the two captains had to say to each other is not on record, but it can well be imagined; while Captain Davis, now thoroughly well stored and equipped, made up his ingenious mind to cross the Atlantic.

He had made a good start, and it was in high spirits, and with a crew that were now his sworn worshippers, that he arrived under the English flag off the Cape Verde Islands, where he first anchored in the harbour of the island of St. Nicolao. Here he seems to have behaved with extreme civility and conducted some more or less profitable trade, staying there for five weeks, and being received by the Portuguese governor with every kind of hospitality. Five of his men, indeed, made themselves so attractive to an equal number of the island ladies that they decided to marry and settle down there,

and were left by Davis on the island. He then had a glance at the harbour of Bonavista—a place formerly visited by Captain Kidd—but finding nothing of importance in it, he proceeded to the small island of Mayo.

In this case, he was more fortunate, for he found several vessels in the roads, which he plundered, apparently without opposition, recruiting many fresh hands. He retained one of the vessels, in which he mounted twenty guns, eventually transferring his flag to her from the *Buck*. Christening her the *King James*, he then proceeded to the neighbouring island of St. Jago, where he intended to lay in a supply of fresh water, and where he decided to approach the governor as a guileless and respectable trader. From the outset, however, the governor was extremely suspicious of him, and, in fact, did not hesitate to tell him so in fairly plain language. Davis, professing himself deeply affronted, denied all the implications against his character, but nevertheless took the precaution of hurrying back to his ship as speedily as possible. His crew shared their captain's indignation, and after considering the matter, Davis decided to capture the place, and actually succeeded, under cover of darkness, in making himself the master of the principal fort. Most of the garrison, however, had wisely retreated to the house of the sceptical governor, where they succeeded in barricading themselves so effectively that, although Davis threw some grenades into it, causing several casualties, he was unable to take it by storm. Moreover, by this time the whole island was alarmed, and when morning broke, Davis decided that it was time to go, and accordingly retreated, with a loss of three men, having first spiked the guns of the captured fort. From the point of view of plunder the enter-

prise had been entirely barren; but it had at any rate proved to the governor that his instinct had been sound.

Davis's company was now nearly seventy strong, and in view of his previous local knowledge, it was decided, after a council of war, to visit the west coast of Africa and Gulf of Guinea, and take such toll as the African trade might afford them. Sail was accordingly set for Gambia, where the Royal Africa Company had a fort, and possibly as a result of his victory at St. Jago, Davis now conceived the idea of taking this fort by storm and emptying such treasure chests as it might contain. For this purpose he again resorted to stratagem, and when the *King James* ran under the fort, she was once more thoroughly disguised as a peaceful merchantman. She was armed, it is true, but these were times when no long-distance merchant-ship was anything else, and the majority of her crew were concealed below decks, only the necessary hands for navigation being visible. As for Davis himself, he dressed himself "like a gentleman," as did his doctor and chief officer, and the three of them were put ashore in this unfamiliar garb by an innocent-looking crew of honest sailormen.

They were received by an armed guard who conducted them to the presence of the governor, and to him they explained that they were three British merchants, whose vessel had been bound from Liverpool to the Senegal River in quest of ivory and gums. They had been illegally chased by a couple of French men-of-war from whom, owing to their superior sailing power, they had had a narrow escape. Disappointed as they had been of their original objective, they stated that they would be glad to negotiate for a cargo of slaves. The governor asked them what kind of goods they

carried, to which they replied that it was chiefly iron and plate, whereupon he agreed to find negroes for them of an equivalent value, and inquired if they were possessed of any European liquor. They informed him that they had barely enough for their own modest requirements, but that they thought it possible that they might spare him a hamper, and he then invited them, with marked cordiality, to stay ashore and dine with him. Davis plausibly explained that, as the *King James's* commander, he must return to her and supervise her anchorage, but that he would rejoin his companions later under the governor's roof and bring with him the hamper of liquor. Meanwhile, he had made careful notes as to the disposition of the sentries, and the arrangement of arms in the guard-house, and come to the conclusion that the capture of the fort was not a task beyond his powers.

Returning to his vessel he arranged that, when the flag of the port had been struck, twenty men as reinforcements should be sent him. He next selected a boat's crew to accompany him back to the governor, each with two pairs of pistols concealed beneath his clothes, and these he ordered to enter the guard-room, get into conversation with the soldiers, and await the firing of a pistol by him from the governor's window. As an additional precaution he took possession of a small sloop lying close beside him in the harbour, and secured her officers and crew on board his own vessel to prevent them from raising any alarm. Davis then returned to the fort, and being somewhat early for dinner, the governor suggested the brewing of an interim bowl of punch, and it was during the consumption of this that Davis discerned and seized his opportunity.

Alone in the room with himself, the chief

officer, and the doctor, the governor of the fort was in a minority, and Davis promptly covered him with one of his pistols and demanded the instant surrender of the fort. Completely taken by surprise, but also probably reflecting that the bulk of the fort's treasure had been recently shipped away, the governor yielded and Davis at once seized such firearms as he found stacked in the apartment. He then fired his pistol from the window, whereupon his men in the guard-room secured the firearms that were piled there, and, overcoming the soldiers, securely locked them out of mischief. The flag was then struck, and the reinforcements from the *King James* hastened ashore, as had been previously arranged, and within a very short time Davis was completely the master of one of the Royal Africa Company's principal stations.

After such a feat some celebration was necessary, and the following day, we are told, was spent in rejoicing, the fort and the vessel saluting each other, although the total amount of plunder proved somewhat disappointing. It nevertheless included, in addition to trading stores, some two thousand pounds in bar gold, and this was taken in due course, and stowed aboard the *King James*. Preparations for departure were then put in hand, but just as Davis was ready for sea, a vessel appeared bearing down upon the bay on a similar errand to that of the *King James*. This belonged to none other than the famous French pirate, La Bouche, whom we have already mentioned as on one occasion forestalling Edward England; and Davis's vessel now appeared to him just the sort of snug merchantman that he was desirous of annexing. He was considerably taken aback, therefore, when at closer quarters he

observed her powerful armament and the large number of her crew, but proportionately relieved when in response to his Black Flag, she floated out one of her own. The two vessels then fraternized, and La Bouche's command being somewhat the worse for wear, they resolved to sail in company, while Davis promised the Frenchman to give him the first suitable vessel that they took.

In this companionship of roguery they made Sierra Leone, where they found a large ship that seemed just what they wanted. But the Fates were against the pirates, for after giving them a broadside, she herself hoisted the Black Flag and proved to belong to a pirate of the name of Cocklyn. A third fellow-spirit was thus added to the party, and after hearing of Davis's successes in the Cape Verde Island and Gambia, the trio decided to attack the fort of Sierra Leone, and in this they were also completely successful. They further took a vessel which, according to his promise, Davis insisted was to belong to La Bouche, and the next seven weeks were spent ashore in relaxation and in cleaning and repairing their ships. It was then decided to continue for a while in company and to proceed along the coast in search of plunder, and Davis was elected to the proud position of Commodore of what had now temporarily become a little pirate squadron. With what was probably a sound instinct, however, he very soon came to the conclusion that this arrangement promised more dangers than advantages, and informed his comrades that he would rather part from them early in love than later in anger. The three then went their separate ways, Davis keeping down the coast, where he presently fell in with three vessels, all of which he plundered and let go, two of them being Scottish and one English.

This had been an easy task, but five days later, in the neighbourhood of Cape Three Points, off what was afterwards to be known as the Gold Coast Colony, he fell in with a Dutch vessel that was destined to give him the hardest fight of his light-hearted career. With a crew of ninety men, half of whom were English, and carrying thirty guns, a more cautious commander would probably have been content to pass her by unchallenged. But that was not Davis's way, and taking her as she came, it was the Dutchman who got in the first broadside, and so effectively that nine of Davis's men were killed outright. Davis at once replied. The fight continued from one o'clock in the afternoon till nine the next morning, when at last the Dutchman surrendered, and Davis took possession of her, re-christening her the *Rover*.

From the fighting point of view, she was a valuable asset, especially as the *King James* was now becoming leaky, and Davis therefore took command of her in person, mounting in her thirty-two guns and twenty-seven swivels. With the *King James* in company, he then continued his voyage along the coast, arriving at Anamabu one day about noon. There he found anchored in the bay three English vessels conducting the usual trade in negroes, gold, and ivory. These were the *Hink*, the *Morrice*, and the *Princess*, and, having relieved them of all their valuables, Davis handed over the *Morrice* to his Dutch prisoners before resuming his way, keeping the other two in company with him, after the fort had fired a few ineffective shots at him.

Hitherto he had gone from strength to strength. Although his days were already numbered, his end was not yet. On the following day he sighted another Dutchman, which was to prove the richest

prize, from the point of view of treasure, that he had yet encountered. Evidently suspicious, on sighting Davis's fleet, she crammed on all sail in an effort to make for the shore, but Davis had the legs of her, and after an exciting race he succeeded in emptying a broadside into her. She thereupon surrendered, and on going aboard, Davis found the Governor of Accra among her passengers, while the cargo included, besides other valuables, fifteen thousand pounds in sterling. Highly satisfied he then restored the *Hink* and the *Princess* to their respective skippers, but recruited another thirty-five hands from their crews before finally releasing them. He also restored the Dutch ship to her commander, and as the *King James* was now very unseaworthy, he took her crew into his own powerful vessel and left the *King James* at anchor off Kamerun.

Davis had by this time a fairly satisfactory dividend to show for his comparatively brief raid in West African waters, and, even allowing for the fact that he was operating upon a turbulent and uncivilized coast, and this in the days before telegrams and cables, a change of venue was desirable. He therefore turned south until he came to Prince's Island, a Portuguese possession about one hundred and twenty miles off the coast of what is now the French Congo. Here the governor took the precaution of sending out a small sloop to make inquiries, and in reply to these Davis, who was flying the British flag, reported himself to be an English man-of-war with a commission to seek out and suppress the pirates, who had lately, as was reported, been extremely busy in those waters. Once more he seems to have satisfied the Portuguese authorities as to his high character and credentials, and he was accordingly formally

saluted by the fort, a salute to which he replied with dignity and civility. He then went ashore and was conducted by a military escort to the house of the governor, by whom he was very courteously and hospitably received.

All might have been well, but for the fact that, later in the day, a French merchantman also came to anchor in the harbour, and Davis could not restrain himself, in spite of his story to the governor, from appropriating the greater part of her goods. From Davis's point of view this was the height of folly, although it was thoroughly in keeping with his character, and even so, but for subsequent indiscretions, he might have escaped with his usual impunity. For upon the governor making inquiries, Davis blandly explained to him that he had discovered the Frenchman to have been trading with pirates, whereupon the governor congratulated him on his prescience and commended him for his zeal. He had once more negotiated an awkward corner, but he still seems to have been bent upon creating trouble for himself, and a few days later found him sauntering inland, with a handful of his men, in the neighbourhood of a certain village.

The governor and others of the chief men of the island kept their favourites, if not their wives in this village, and though Davis and his men, whatever may have been their intentions, seem merely to have frightened these, the incident was not likely to create the happiest of impressions. For some little time, however, the identity of the trespassers remained unknown, and Davis, who was now ready to put to sea again, decided before doing so to utilize the golden opportunity of sacking the island. He therefore arranged a banquet on board the *Rover;* the governor and his chief officials were to be invited to the feast; and they were to be seized

as a preliminary to his own operations upon the island. But Davis's course was now nearly run, and a member of the plundered Frenchman, who had somehow obtained knowledge of the proposed scheme, and had also learned the identity of the recent visitors to the inland village, contrived to get ashore and placed full particulars at the disposal of the enraged governor.

But the governor was not lacking in the sort of wit in which Davis himself excelled, and he accordingly accepted the invitation to the banquet, Davis promising to come ashore with some of his men and bring him aboard as a mark of honour. This was admirably suited to the governor's plans, and when Davis landed he was received with every mark of favour, and pressed with his men to come to the governor's house for a little refreshment before returning on board. Hardly had they begun to do so, however, than they found themselves in an ambuscade; bullets were poured into them from all sides; and only one of the party that had left the ship succeeded in getting back. As for Davis, he was shot through the stomach, but nevertheless made a desperate attempt to avoid his would-be captors. He finally collapsed, but firing to the last and dying with his pistols in his hands. It was a fitting end for such a career, short even for an eighteenth century pirate, but of its own kind one of the most daring and ingenious on record.

CHAPTER X

BARTHOLOMEW ROBERTS

It will be remembered that it was as the result of his capture in 1718, in the Gulf of Guinea, by the pirate Captain England that Howel Davis entered upon his own brief but brilliant career as a sea-outlaw. Similarly it was as the result of his capture by Howel Davis, while serving as second mate in the merchantman *Princess*, that Bartholomew Roberts in his turn became a pirate, destined to be more famous than either. Like Howel Davis he was a Welshman, a Pembrokeshire man nearing forty, and it was while the *Princess* was anchored off Anamabu, a village on the Gold Coast some nine miles from Cape Coast Castle, and was peacefully conducting there a trade in negroes, gold, and ivory, that Davis had seized and plundered her and compelled her for a few days to keep company with him. A little while later, however, he had taken a wealthy Dutch vessel, and had thereupon restored the *Princess* to her own skipper, but had recruited some of her crew, and amongst them Bartholomew Roberts, for his own command.

This, as will be remembered, then consisted of the *King James*, originally a Portuguese vessel taken at Mayo Island in the Cape Verdes, and a converted Dutch vessel, re-christened the *Rover*, captured near Cape Three Points after a twenty-

four hours' fight. Soon after this, Davis was killed at Prince's Island. All but one of the boat's crew that had landed with him were also either killed or captured, and the crew of the *Rover*—the *King James*, as we have said, being unseaworthy, had been at anchor off Kamerun—were accordingly left to choose another leader. Needless to say, they were a wild enough company, containing many reckless and courageous members, at least two of whom, Kennedy and Anstis, were afterwards to attain independent notoriety. But the choice fell upon Roberts, recently though he had joined, probably on account of his seniority no less than his character, which is described as one of dauntless bravery, and a certain temperance and humanity, in which he seems rather to have resembled Captain England.

Roberts was now possessed in the *Rover* of a vessel mounting some thirty guns and twenty-seven swivels, and containing a crew of probably from one hundred to one hundred and twenty men; and his first act was to undertake some sort of reprisal for the death of the unscrupulous but light-hearted Davis. He accordingly landed a storming party of thirty men under the command of Kennedy—an ex-pickpocket and burglar—to attack the fort that commanded the harbour of Prince's Island. This was situated on a hill, and offered a sufficiently difficult problem, but under cover of the *Rover's* guns, Kennedy and his party reached the fort; the Portuguese garrison incontinently fled; the guns of the fort were rolled into the sea; and the pirates returned to their ship. Many of the crew then wanted to sack and burn the town, but this was so well protected by thick surrounding woods, that Roberts foresaw many probable casualties, and in the end dissuaded them from their enterprise. Two

Portuguese vessels, however, which were in the harbour, were burned before the *Rover* departed, while a French ship that Davis had already plundered was restored to its commander.

Roberts then sailed south, and his first independent capture was a Dutch vessel, which he looted and afterwards restored to her commander and crew. Two days later he fell in with a small English vessel, the *Experiment*, off Cape Lopez on the coast of the French Congo, robbing and burning her, and forcibly recruiting all her hands. He then made his way to the island of St. Thomas, and thence back to Anamabu, and here, according to one authority, he fell in for a while with the group of pirates still operating under Captain England. Whether this be the case or not, however, a council of war was now held with the object of deciding whether the next field of action should be the East Indies or Brazil; and the majority of Roberts' men decided for the latter. They put to sea, therefore, and arrived about a month later at a small uninhabited island, in the neighbourhood of the Brazilian coast, and here landed and cleaned their vessel, preparatory to resuming operations in their new field. For some weeks, however, they were so unsuccessful that they had just decided to make their way to the West Indies when they unexpectedly happened upon a large Portuguese fleet about to sail for Lisbon convoyed by two men-of-war. Laden with treasure, this was in the harbour of what is now Bahia, or San Salvador, and Roberts, undeterred by its numbers at once decided to take what toll he could of the fleet that he had thus so luckily stumbled upon.

He therefore approached what seemed to him to be one of the most substantial-looking vessels, and when close alongside he ordered her master aboard,

threatening him and all his hands with instant death if they should offer the least resistance, or give any alarm to their colleagues. Thoroughly taken aback by so unexpected an apparition, and over-awed by the naked cutlasses of the pirates, the master at once submitted, whereupon Bartholomew Roberts, in his usual courtly fashion, treated him with extreme politeness. At the same time he made it quite clear to him that, if he wanted his own ship restored, he must not only point out the richest in the fleet, but give his assistance in making Roberts its master. Faced with the unpleasant alternative of immediate death, the Portuguese captain then indicated one of his consorts, a large vessel containing forty guns and a crew of one hundred and fifty men.

Roberts was not to be dismayed, however, by her size, and with the captured Portuguese captain still on board the *Rover*, he approached this vessel and insisted upon his prisoner hailing her commander and inquiring after his health. He then issued an invitation to him to come on board as he had a matter of the utmost consequence to discuss with him. But Roberts soon divined, although his invitation had been accepted, that his own real character had been discovered. He therefore decided to take all risks, trust to his star, and immediately entered into action, emptying a broadside into the Portuguese vessel, and then grappling with her and landing a boarding-party. His promptitude paid him, for in a very few minutes, and with the loss of but two men, he had made himself the master of the vessel, though not of course without discovering himself to the whole fleet. This was now thoroughly alarmed; signal guns were being fired on all hands; and messages were flagged to the two men-of-war. But Roberts remained unperturbed, and finding his large

prize difficult to manœuvre, lay serenely by, prepared to deal with all comers. Nor did the two men-of-war, who were still at anchor, show any great desire to accept his challenge, and while one of them waited for the other, Roberts and his prize leisurely disappeared over the horizon. Laden with sugar, skins, and tobacco, she proved to contain among other things 40,000 gold moidores, as well as many precious stones, including a diamond cross destined for the King of Portugal.

Although he had to wait so long for his first victim, this Portuguese vessel had made ample amends, and Roberts proceeded in company with her up the coast of Brazil, eventually arriving off the Surinam River in what is now Dutch Guiana. He found a governor and population quite willing to trade with him without asking awkward questions; and indeed the former was so amenable that Roberts presented him with the diamond cross that had been intended for the King of Portugal. After staying for some time, however, he found himself in need of various marine stores that the place could not supply, and learning that a Rhode Island vessel was shortly expected, he resolved to capture her and replenish himself. These tidings he had received from a small sloop that he had previously captured in the river, and when the Rhode Islander was signalled the next evening, he put out to sea in this with some forty men. It was perhaps a hasty step, and he was to pay for it bitterly, for not only did he lose sight of her owing to a sudden change in the weather, but eight days later he found himself some ninety miles away, totally unprovisioned and without water. Worse was to follow, too, for having sent a boat back to the Surinam River for help, this presently returned with tidings that Kennedy, his

second-in-command, had disappeared with both the *Rover* and her prize.

To most men such a blow would have been a crushing one, and Roberts' feelings can well be imagined, faulty though his judgment may have been in leaving Kennedy in command, and his seamanship in not fore-guarding himself against the disaster which had overtaken him. But it would perhaps have been some comfort to him to learn, as he probably never did, that Kennedy's subsequent career was a very inglorious one, and one that need only be touched upon because it embraced an incident that was perhaps unique in the annals of piracy. For on his way to Barbados he took a ship from Virginia, under the command of one Captain Knot, a Quaker, who carried no arms and who practised in the most literal sense the doctrine of non-resistance. Such a phenomenon must have been strange indeed to Kennedy and his associates, but having robbed him, some eight of Kennedy's crew were so impressed with the captain's curious attitude that they accepted this excellent opportunity of retiring from the pirates' life.

They therefore took passage with him, having first presented him, we are told, with twenty chests of sugar, ten rolls of Brazilian tobacco and some thirty moidores, amounting in all to about £250, and led a life on board that must have been a piquant contrast to the customary régime of the Quaker captain. The little vessel, however, with its strangely assorted company, presently arrived safely off the Capes of Virginia, where four of the pirates found a convenient occasion of landing in one of Captain Knot's boats. But the Quaker skipper, for all his beliefs, was not without a pretty strong vein of native shrewdness, and without arousing any suspicions in the breasts of his remain-

ing passengers, he contrived to let Governor Spotswood know the character of his unwonted passengers. Being an energetic man, Spotswood, who had a year or two previously effected the capture of the notorious Blackbeard, took immediate measures, with the result that all eight were captured and hanged in due course—Captain Knot, true to his principles, returning all the presents that the pirates had given him and insisting upon his crew doing the same. As for Kennedy, he also subsequently deserted his own command, and was afterwards discovered keeping a house of ill-fame in the Deptford Road, London. Here he was hanged on the July 19th, 1721, the *Rover* having in the meantime been found at sea deserted by all except nine negroes, and ultimately taken into the harbour at the Island of St. Christopher in the West Indies.

Meanwhile, Bartholomew Roberts was faced with the problem of beginning his pirate life anew, bereft of his treasures and in a small sloop with but forty men and desperately short of provisions. But in this, as in every vicissitude of his amazing career, he entirely refused to be cast down, and the mere enumeration of his subsequent travels is a liberal education in geography. His obvious first necessity, however, was to re-equip himself with victuals and ammunition, and this he succeeded in doing by surprising a couple of small trading-vessels in the neighbourhood of the Windward Islands. He then took a Rhode Island brigantine, and steered a course for Barbados, still the most flourishing British possession in the West Indies, and the centre of an extensive trade, and it was near this island that he encountered an outward-bound Bristol ship, laden with clothes, food, and ammunition. From this he further added to his stores, besides recruiting some of her hands, and then, rather unwisely from his

standpoint, he let her go. This was an act for which he might have paid dearly, for running into Barbados she immediately gave the alarm, and as there were no men-of-war upon the station, a merchantman was hurriedly fitted out with twenty guns and eighty men, with a smaller vessel for consort containing a crew of forty and mounting ten guns. Two days later Roberts fell in with these, and assuming them to be innocent traders, approached them, subsequently having to make a bolt for it and only escaping at the price of throwing several of his guns overboard.

It was a near thing, but he took it with his usual philosophy, and making next for the island of Dominica he watered and provisioned himself unobtrusively, legitimately paying for all his purchases. Here too he met a little group of fellow-spirits—English smugglers who had been captured by a French Martinique coastguard vessel—and these very soon agreed to throw in their lot with him, and here once more he was to have an escape of the narrowest order, although at the time he was unaware of it. For the news had quickly come to the neighbouring island of Martinique of the presence of the pirate vessel, and two armed sloops were immediately despatched for the purpose of capturing him. Fortunately for himself he had already sailed south again, and although the two Frenchmen followed hard after him, he again evaded them at his next stopping-place, although merely by a matter of a few hours.

Roberts was of course ignorant of this, but he had decided to leave the West Indies, and no more was heard of him until June, 1720, when he suddenly reappeared flaunting his Black Flag, and to an accompaniment, we are told, of drums and trumpets, off the harbour of Trepassy, some eighty miles from

St. John's, Newfoundland. Here he found some twenty-two vessels totally unprepared for such an apparition as he presented, and there quickly followed a scene of havoc probably without parallel in the history of the island. Of the twenty-two vessels that he found there, he burnt all except one —a Bristol galley that he decided to keep, and to which he transferred his flag. The galley he manned with sixteen guns, and leaving behind him a mass of charred wreckage and broken harbour stages, he fell in almost immediately with yet another fleet of nine or ten French vessels. These also he destroyed with but a single exception—a vessel of twenty-six guns, to which he once more transferred himself and his command. This he called the *Fortune*, handing over to her French crew the Bristol galley which he had just left, and in this, accompanied by his original sloop, he proceeded to take soon afterwards several more small vessels in the North Atlantic. These included the *Richard* of Bideford, the *William Hind* of Poole, and the *Samuel* of London, a vessel containing several passengers and some nine thousand pounds' worth of goods.

It had been a remarkable raid—perhaps the most remarkable in pirate history—and replete with provisions and plunder, he sauntered southwards again into the profitable neighbourhood of the West Indies. For some time his luck deserted him, and finding it necessary to revictual, he made his way to the island of St. Christopher to purchase the necessary stores. But he seems to have taken very little trouble to disguise his character, or the purpose for which the stores were wanted, and found himself unable, much to his annoyance, to obtain what he wanted. He therefore fired on the town, burned a couple of ships in the harbour, and departed for the

neighbouring island of St. Bartholomew, where he was well received and where he succeeded in obtaining all that he wanted. His latest experiences, however, seem to have tired him of the West Indies, and from St. Bartholomew he decided to cross the Atlantic and once more resume operations upon the coast of West Africa. On the way he encountered a French ship, homeward bound from Martinique, and carrying a very valuable cargo, and to this he transferred his flag, calling his new command the *Royal Fortune*.

But he was now on the verge of another set-back that again might easily have proved fatal to him, for intending to call at the Cape Verde Islands to clean his ship, he seems entirely to have lost his bearings, and at last found himself obliged to make his way back with the trade wind across the Atlantic to the West Indies. Ultimately he decided to try again for the Surinam River on the Guiana coast, but long before he reached this he was in the direst straits owing to lack of food and even more so of water. With a crew of a hundred and twenty men, and while in mid-ocean, he was obliged to limit his water ration to a mouthful a day, most of his crew being reduced to skeletons, and deaths occurring almost daily. At last, however, the unhappy vessel succeeded in making the South American coast, and lowering a boat, the least feeble of his men were able to bring back a supply of fresh water.

Once more therefore the situation was saved, and still undaunted by his experiences, Roberts and his depleted crew made their way towards Barbados, where they captured two vessels that again supplied their deficiencies. He then made for the island of Tobago, where he landed, and it was while here that he heard about the two armed sloops from

Martinique that had so nearly captured him before he had set out for his Newfoundland enterprise. Characteristically he decided that this was a debt that self-respect demanded him to meet, and accordingly he made his way to Martinique for the purpose of discharging it. Knowing that it was a habit of certain Dutch smuggling vessels to carry on a trade with the local merchants, and that these vessels used a particular signal, he decided to do likewise, and flying the appropriate flag, he soon found himself approached by eager traders. These were politely received, but as each came aboard, he was deprived of his cash, and in due course sent home again a disillusioned and poorer man. Honour being satisfied, he then returned to Dominica, in the neighbourhood of which he took a Dutch vessel of twenty-two guns, as well as another Rhode Island brigantine, and with these two prizes he next made his way to the island of Guadaloupe. Here he captured two more vessels, one of which he burnt, and then sailed to the island of Hispaniola, where, in a convenient harbour, he cleaned his ship, and stripped and destroyed his prizes, keeping only the Rhode Island brigantine which he decided to use as a consort, christening her the *Good Fortune*.

Rested and re-equipped, and with two adequate vessels at his command, Roberts then set sail again with the *Royal Fortune* and the *Good Fortune*, soon afterwards capturing a vessel bound for Jamaica and carrying a very rich cargo. This he took with him to the island of Barbuda, where he emptied her at his leisure, and whence, for some weeks longer, he haunted the neighbouring islands, accumulating a large supply of provisions and ammunition. He then decided once more to shape his course for the Gulf of Guinea, but on his way, while still a considerable distance from the West African coast, he

was deserted by his consort, under the command of Anstis, who took with him some seventy hands. Roberts carried on, however, and arrived in due course off the Senegal River, where the French held a monopoly of the local trade in ivory, gums, and slaves. For purposes of protection the French government usually kept two men-of-war at this station whose duty it also was to prevent trading enterprises on the part of foreign merchants. Assuming Roberts to be one of these, the two French gunboats accordingly set out to drive him away, but were so taken by surprise when he hoisted the Black Flag that they surrendered to him out of hand. Roberts then took them with him down the coast as far as Sierra Leone, where he converted one of them into an auxiliary storeship, and the other into an armed consort that he christened the *Ranger*.

This was in June, 1721, and while at Sierra Leone he learnt that two English naval vessels, the *Swallow* and *Weymouth*, under the command of Captain Chalenor Ogle, and carrying fifty guns each, had left the harbour about a month before and were not expected to return until Christmas. He accordingly remained for six weeks at Sierra Leone, cleaning his vessels and making full preparations, and then proceeded methodically down the coast, steadily plundering as he went. Amongst others he took a valuable vessel, the property of the Royal Africa Company, and commandeered her for his own use, re-christening her the *Royal Fortune*, and handing over the original *Royal Fortune* to the commander and crew of the captured vessel. A somewhat amusing episode of this capture was the attempt made by Roberts and his men to secure as a recruit a Church of England parson, whom they had found upon the Royal Africa Company's ship. The presence of a divine on board could surely do no

less, they asserted, than bring the *Royal Fortune* the luck she deserved, but the parson remained firm in his refusal to join them, and the pirates seem to have shown an unwonted respect to his cloth. In the end they allowed him to return not only with his own property, of which he had been previously relieved, but with a good many trinkets and personal belongings of his companions, for the restoration of which he had pleaded.

The *Royal Fortune* and the *Ranger* then proceeded upon their way, arriving at Old Calabar on the coast of Nigeria, in the following October, where they captured a few more vessels, and where they afterwards stayed for some weeks, cleaning their own ships and attempting to trade with the natives. The latter, however, proved extremely reluctant to have any dealings with the pirates, who subsequently undertook reprisals for their obstinacy and burnt their town. After this they turned south along the coast of Kamerun and the French Congo until they came to Cape Lopez, and thence they proceeded to the little island of Annobon, now a Spanish possession. Here they remained for some time, and it was from here that they started upon what was to prove their last raid, returning, probably unwisely, to the coast they had just left. They began operations by capturing another vessel belonging to the Royal Africa Company, as well as a Dutch merchantman, arriving soon afterwards off Whydah in the Bight of Benin. They found congregated in this anchorage eleven vessels, French, English, and Portuguese. They intimidated the crews so thoroughly that each was persuaded to pay a ransom to Roberts and his men of eight pounds of gold dust. More important still, they intercepted a letter here, addressed to the agent of the Royal Africa Company's Whydah agent, informing him

that H.M.S. *Swallow* was on the track of the pirates. After considering the position thus disclosed, Roberts decided to retreat once more to the little island of Annobon, leaving Whydah on the 13th of January, 1722, but finding himself unable to make the island owing to adverse conditions of wind and weather. Meanwhile, the *Swallow* under Chalenor Ogle, a naval officer of considerable experience, was hard upon his heels, and arrived at Whydah only four days after the *Royal Fortune* and *Ranger* had taken their departure. Owing to illness on board, the *Swallow* up to this time had scarcely been in a position to challenge the pirate, and had indeed, two or three months previously, been obliged to put into Prince's Island, where Captain Ogle had buried no less than fifty of his men.

But he was now determined to put an end to these pirates, who for so long had been terrorizing the coast, and two days later was at sea again on his way to search every likely hiding-place. Of these the first he explored was the Gabun River, about a hundred miles north of Cape Lopez, but drawing this blank, he proceeded down the coast, arriving off the Cape on February 5th. He found three ships, of which it was quickly clear that Roberts and his consort were two, and here, by a fortunate accident, a plan of campaign dictated itself, of which Ogle was quick to take advantage. For the *Swallow* had to beat off a little to avoid a sand-bank in the bay, and this manœuvre was interpreted by Roberts, who had not realized the *Swallow's* true character, as a sign of alarm. He accordingly ordered the *Ranger* to pursue her, and Ogle, divining what had happened, kept away to sea and only let the *Ranger* approach him when she was out of gunshot hearing of her consort. The *Ranger*, still in ignorance of the *Swallow's* mission

and armament, fell into the trap and confidently followed her, eventually hoisting her Black Flag and ordering the *Swallow* to come to. This the *Swallow* did, only disclosing her batteries when within a pistol-shot of the *Ranger*, who was staggered by a broadside that killed two men outright and wounded twenty others. After a brief action, during which her commander, a Welshman named Skyrm, lost one of his legs but refused to desist from fighting, the *Ranger* surrendered with all hands, seventy-seven of these being English, sixteen French, and twenty negroes.

For two days the *Swallow* laid by her, repairing her sufficiently to enable her to be taken into Prince's Island with her wounded, and by February 9th she was back at Cape Lopez, where to her satisfaction she found the *Royal Fortune* still at anchor with the other vessel. The next morning she put into the bay, and again it was some little time before Roberts realized his danger, and when he did so, it was at once apparent to him that only the most desperate effort could suffice to save him. He accordingly decided to cram on all sail in a forlorn attempt to pass the *Swallow;* he had evidently made up his mind to meet this, his greatest adventure, in characteristic fashion. He therefore hoisted his Black Flag, while he himself, we are told, made an amazing and gallant figure, "being dressed in a rich Crimson Damask Waistcoat and Breeches, a red Feather in his Hat, a Gold Chain round his Neck, with a Diamond Cross hanging to it, a Sword in his hand, and two Pair of Pistols hanging at the end of a Silk Sling, flung over his Shoulders."

Sweeping past the *Swallow*, he received her broadside and returned it, and might have got away, but lost the wind. The *Swallow* caught him

up, and with her superior armament soon began an attack. Roberts himself was hit in the throat, dying on deck in a few minutes, and soon afterwards the *Royal Fortune* surrendered, although only three of her crew had been actually killed during the action. Of the remainder—a hundred and fifty-seven whites and forty-five negroes—fifty-two were afterwards hanged at Cape Coast Castle, nineteen dying before their trial, and twenty more were sentenced to seven years indentured labour upon the coast. The rest were acquitted. On his return to England in 1723, Ogle was knighted in view of the great service he had rendered by ridding the West African coast of so dangerous an enemy, while he was further rewarded by being given, as a special personal gift, the pirate's ship and effects, amounting, we are told, to the value of some three thousand pounds.

CHAPTER XI

JOHN PLANTAIN OF MADAGASCAR

In the persons of Captain England, Howel Davis, and Bartholomew Roberts we have already dealt with three of the chief figures of what was probably the most successful group of early eighteenth pirates. But none of these had a career more individual than that of John Plantain; and although his final years are wrapped in obscurity, he certainly survived most of his comrades. Indeed long after the three whom we have mentioned had passed for ever from their little stage, Plantain was a flourishing potentate who had turned his attention from piracy at sea to make himself the strongest man in the island of Madagascar.

Born in Jamaica of English parents somewhere about the year 1700, he went to sea, according to his own account, as a skipper's boy at the age of thirteen, serving in a privateer, perhaps the roughest sea-school that the period could have provided. For a time he was engaged in what for many years had been a favouring buccaneering trade, namely, the cutting of logwood on the Mexican coast in the Spanish zone of occupation. This naturally led to reprisals and counter-reprisals, and the chronic maintenance of a sort of unofficial warfare, and for seven years this appears to have been the young Plantain's chief and congenial occupation.

He then wandered north, and at the age of twenty, while ashore at Rhode Island in New England, fell in with a crew of pirates who were spending their money freely and recruiting likely lads for fresh enterprises. Well enough placed as he was, Plantain was attracted by their stories and promises of easy fortune rapidly gained, and also by the opportunity of exploring fresh fields in the shape of the Gulf of Guinea, where they proposed to operate. It was not difficult to persuade him, and together with five other young Englishmen, all of whom were under twenty-three, he signed articles under Captain John Williams and sailed for West Africa in the sloop *Terrible*—the ship's quartermaster being one Roberts, identified by Plantain's historian as the afterwards famous Bartholomew. This may have been the case, although it must be regarded as very uncertain, as also the presence on board of Edward England, but it is clear that soon after arriving off the west coast of Africa, Plantain became associated with the latter, and eventually rounded the Cape with him, and served under his command in the Indian Ocean.

He was thus, as we have said, a member of what must probably be regarded as the richest and most formidable body of contemporary pirates, and he seems to have secured at least as large a proportion of their booty as anybody concerned, not excluding his captain. Indeed, it seems pretty clear that when the group eventually dispersed from its final rendezvous on the north-east coast of Madagascar, Plantain, who decided to remain there, was the wealthiest member of the party that continued to reside upon the island.

Of his adventures up to then, the story of Captain England contains the substantial account,

and it will be remembered that one of the chief factors leading to the eventual dismemberment of the company, of which England was so long the predominant figure, was the arrival in Eastern waters of a naval squadron under the command of Commodore Matthews in the years 1721-1722. Of this, the main body of the pirates, who were in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's Island, had obtained information by intercepting a message left by the commodore at St. Augustine's Bay on the south-western coast. By this time Captain England, if he had not been actually deposed, was in poor circumstances and did not sail with them, the majority departing under the command of his rival and successor, Captain Taylor. The naval contingent therefore arrived too late, but on landing in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's Island, encountered Plantain who, with a couple of comrades, had occupied a considerable strip of territory. Unable to arrest him owing to his fortifications and the strength of the native army he had already recruited, they accordingly entered into relations with him for the delivery of supplies, and it was from his own lips that they heard his early story and the tale of his adventures under England. Several years later, from another English adherent of Plantain's, the story of his subsequent enterprises became known, and it is from these two narratives that we are able to piece together one of the strangest careers in the sea-history of England.

Rightly to understand it, it is necessary to have some idea of the island upon which Plantain had decided to make his home, and of which it became his dream, and eventually his actual achievement, to make himself the virtual monarch. Although next to Borneo and New Guinea it was the third largest island in the world, being some nine hundred

miles long and from two to three hundred miles broad, it was then as now comparatively sparsely populated by a race or group of races of Malay origin, serving different local chieftains or petty kings, and speaking to all intents and purposes the same language. As a place of settlement for white men it had, as we have seen, so far proved a disastrous failure, but for the previous half century and probably longer, certain convenient harbours both in the north and south of the island had been the favourite and frequented landing-places of Indian Ocean pirates. Hither, as we have stated, both Kidd and Avery had resorted a generation before; and since it had been the pirates' policy, as a rule, to conciliate the natives, and since many of them had taken native wives, a friendly tradition had been established which succeeding pirates had found extremely useful.

This then was the position when Plantain, still in his twenties, decided to establish himself upon the island, and with his two colleagues to finance an army and make himself at any rate a local monarch. Of these two colleagues one was a young Scotchman, James Adair, whose education was somewhat superior to Plantain's, in that he had been taught to write as well as to read, but a young man, we are told, "of a very hard Countenance," though "something inclined to Good Nature." The other was a Dane of the name of Hans Burgen, a cooper by trade, who had later gone to sea and had been captured off the coast of Guinea by the pirate company to which Plantain already belonged. With these two, and with the assistance of a man known as Mulatto Tom—the son, as he alleged himself to be, of the famous Captain Avery—Plantain adopted from the outset as high a standard of magnificence as his resources allowed, and added

to his household numerous native wives as well as servants of all descriptions. To these women-folk he gave such familiar English names as Moll, Kate, Sue, and Peg, while his favourites were decked in the silks and diamonds that had been his share of the East Indies spoil; and his first impulse to conquest appears to have originated in the desire to add to their number the half-English and very beautiful granddaughter of a neighbouring native king, known to the pirates as King Dick.

This girl had been named by her grandfather Eleanora Brown, and was able to speak a little of Plantain's language, but much as he feared Plantain, who had already armed many of his followers with European fire-arms and was well provided with ammunition, King Dick was strongly disinclined to admit him into his family circle. In this he was supported by several of Plantain's former comrades, including England himself, who had attached themselves to his court, and who advised resistance to Plantain's advances. But Plantain was not the type of man to be turned aside, and promptly sent a message to King Dick that if he did not at once agree to his proposition, he would drive him by force out of his kingdom. He further added that, if he succeeded in taking him prisoner, he would send him to another local monarch, King William, of St. Augustine's Bay, with orders that he was to be sold as a slave to the first English vessel that touched at the harbour. These threats had a certain effect on King Dick, but after further consultation with his English guests, he decided to stand firm by his refusal, and informed Plantain that "he would not give him the Trouble to come quite to his Home, but that he would certainly meet him half-way."

To a man of Plantain's character such an answer

meant an instant preparation for war, and he therefore decided to enter into a temporary alliance with various others of King Dick's local rivals. Several of these were only too glad to join him, including one King Kelly of Manangore in the south-east of the island, who, for a financial consideration, brought a thousand men with him, and was received by Plantain with lavish hospitality. A further thousand men were also recruited by Mulatto Tom from St. Mary's Island, and these men proved in the end to be the most dependable troops under Plantain's command. With considerable foresight, too, Plantain took care to distribute his fire-arms only amongst the most proven of his men, and these again were discreetly interspersed amongst the main body of his army. This was divided into three companies, the first under himself, with the English flag at its head; the second under Adair, behind the colours of St. Andrew; and the third under Hans Burgen, with the standard of Denmark for its rallying-point. Thus organized, Plantain set his troops moving, but just before he came into contact with the enemy, King Kelly decided to leave him and throw in his lot with King Dick. This was an unexpected blow, and one that made Plantain swear the death of both, but he nevertheless held on, and after a fierce fight completely routed the army of King Dick, capturing some of his erstwhile English comrades and subsequently torturing them to death.

Meanwhile, King Kelly, who had been awaiting the event, had been joined by King Dick and by some of the remnants of his defeated army, and the victorious Plantain decided to push on at once and endeavour to destroy them both. This second battle, however, proved a much more serious affair than the first, and at the end of a long day's fighting,

the issue remained uncertain, with heavy losses on both sides. Night fell, enforcing a truce, but Plantain refused a proposal to discuss terms, and distributing some brandy to his tired forces, urged them to a greater effort when morning broke. In this he was successful, finally routing the enemy and taking many of them prisoners, two of the latter being Englishmen, whom he tortured to death, as he had previously tortured their colleagues. But the two kings evaded him, as did Captain England who had been with them, the last named making his way to St. Augustine's Bay and throwing himself upon the mercy of King William. King Kelly and King Dick meanwhile retreated to the capital town of the latter's province, where they entrenched themselves so effectively that after a vain attempt to capture the place, Plantain was obliged to retreat.

For better or worse, Plantain was now committed to the dangerous road that he had begun to tread, and apart from his determination to win for himself the woman upon whom he had set his heart, he had stirred up too many hatreds and opened up too many issues to permit of any withdrawal. He soon returned to the attack, therefore, and for the next couple of years waged a bitter warfare with the two kings, finally sacking King Dick's capital, capturing the monarch, whom he put to death as he had sworn, and carrying his Nelly, as he afterwards called her, back to his own domain. Brutally as he had captured her, however, he seems to have become sincerely attached to her, celebrating her arrival with a great feast, clothing her, as we are told, "with the richest Jewels and Diamonds" he had, and giving her "twenty Girl Slaves to wait on her." Later he had several children by her, and his affection for her is the more curious as she is described as a sincerely religious woman, whose

father "had taught her the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments," and had given her "an Insight into the Christian Faith; but not having the Conveniency of Books, he could not so fully instruct her as he desired."

To such a character as Plantain she must have seemed a strange contrast, and it is recorded that she would often talk to him "concerning Religion, ask him after God; and according to her Father's Direction, say her Prayers Night and Morning: On which account, Plantain used to say he had now got a Religious Wife; but yet took what she said in good part." Any effect that she may have had upon him is not very apparent in his actual conduct, but he seems to have treated her with growing love and respect, giving her the full charge of all his household affairs. But Eleanor Brown was not the only treasure of which he had possessed himself by his conquest of King Dick's dominion, and great stores of grain and other valuable commodities were captured and removed to his own headquarters. He then burned the town, as also that of King Kelly, who had again succeeded in escaping him, and reorganized both their provinces, setting many of his new subjects to the methodical formation of sugar plantations, which he afterwards brought to a high state of cultivation.

Though his army had been naturally exhausted by his two years' warfare, his prestige as a leader of men was now very high, and during the months that followed, in which he was resting his troops and preparing for his next campaign against King Kelly, he lived in regal opulence at his own castle, and received regular tribute both from his old and new subjects. Over the latter he had placed subordinate chieftains in the places of King Dick and King Kelly, and these were obliged to send him

every month a certain number of cattle, together with other provisions, and at the same time to keep their lands in good order and superintend the various agricultural enterprises that Plantain had set on foot. Most of the remaining Englishmen, too, had by now drifted to his court, the chief exception being his old master, Captain England, who was still in the south-west of the island under the protection of King William of St. Augustine's Bay. This king was an ally of Plantain's, whose chief remaining enemies were now King Kelly and the latter's brother—a powerful chieftain in the neighbourhood of what is now Port Dauphin in the south-east of the island.

But Plantain was not the man to rest very long upon his laurels, and with Mulatto Tom reorganizing and disciplining his army, he soon felt himself able to proceed once more against King Kelly and his recalcitrant brother at Port Dauphin. Accordingly having left a strong garrison at his own castle, he set out with his army, brushing aside all opposition until he arrived at last before the town in which the two kings had once more fortified themselves. There he found himself confronted, however, by some old guns that had been retrieved from broken-up pirate vessels, and these, clumsily mounted as they were on old carriages without wheels, had such a demoralizing effect on some of his native troops that rumours of mutiny and desertion began to come to his ears. These were abruptly silenced by the torture of two or three of the supposed ringleaders, but the siege, nevertheless, proved to be a very long one, and indeed it was not until another eighteen months had passed that Plantain succeeded in finally making himself the master of Port Dauphin. Moreover, not only did he lose Hans Burgen, who was killed in action, but he was also obliged to

return to his headquarters to which, in his absence, three or four other local chieftains had taken the opportunity of laying siege. But his garrison had remained loyal, and kept his castle intact until he himself arrived on the scene with a relieving force, when he succeeded after a fierce struggle, in which he sustained many casualties, in putting the besiegers to flight.

Meanwhile he had despatched other troops, under the adequate command of Mulatto Tom, to attack the capital towns of the various besieging chiefs, and most of these were destroyed, Plantain eventually uniting with his chief of staff and bringing fire and massacre in his train. Indeed he eventually found himself some five hundred miles from home and in the neighbourhood of St. Augustine's Bay, and before returning to his original objective at Port Dauphin, he decided to pay his respects to King William. He was received with every mark of honour. While he was being entertained at the Bay three vessels from Bristol anchored in the roads with the object of bartering their goods for slaves. To Plantain this was a most convenient and profitable opportunity of disposing of the many hundred prisoners that his troops had taken, and these, together with their wives and children, were promptly shipped aboard the three English vessels to the equal satisfaction of the captains concerned. Probably wisely, Plantain refused all invitations to go on board, but was glad to receive in exchange for his prisoners, large quantities of beads and other trading commodities, together with some welcome fire-arms and ammunition. The grateful captains, whose commercial mission had thus been so speedily and satisfactorily accomplished, made a personal present to Plantain of "two Suits of their fine lac'd Clothes for his own wear," and also "let

him have Shoes, Stockings, Hats, and such things as they could most conveniently spare. They also spared him what Liquor they could, and left several trifling Presents for his Wives."

Having concluded this transaction and dispatched these fresh supplies upon their month's journey to his own home, Plantain now turned his attention to the long-delayed overthrow of King Kelly and his brother, this time taking with him a couple of cannon that he had found at St. Augustine's Bay. These he mounted on carriages, each requiring several yoke of oxen to transport them across country, and they proved to be the decisive factor in bringing the prolonged siege of the town to an end. After ten days' bombardment the inhabitants surrendered at discretion, Plantain entering the town and butchering them with his usual ruthlessness, capturing and killing the two kings a few days later.

With this achievement he had now attained his ambition and made himself for all practical purposes king of the whole of Madagascar. Over Port Dauphin and its surrounding country he appointed his ally, King William of St. Augustine's Bay, to be his viceroy, while he rewarded several of his officers and allied local chieftains with similar authority over other districts in the island. He then extended an amnesty to all the Europeans who were still outside his own entourage, and most of these, including Captain England, repaired to his castle, where he entertained them with his usual magnificence. For an illiterate man, still under thirty, in an unfamiliar and difficult country, Plantain's achievement, apart from its barbarities, was undoubtedly evidence of exceptional strength of character; and it was perhaps equally typical of him that, although he had already exhibited high

administrative powers, he soon tired of his triumph and yearned, like Alexander, for fresh worlds to conquer. To this he was perhaps also tempted by the endless difficulties that he saw before him in maintaining his supremacy and enforcing law and order; and after discussing the future with some of his European comrades, he at length decided to seek other spheres.

With characteristic energy, therefore, he set about building himself a sloop, at the same time concealing from his native subjects that this was anything but a pleasure boat. Finally, although he had but two carpenters at his command, he succeeded in finishing her, loaded her with all his most valuable portable treasures, and with his wife Nelly at his side, bade farewell to his kingdom. That he had meant to revert to piracy again, at this early stage at any rate, does not seem very likely. But at the island of Johanna, his first port of call, he found a Bengal ship ready to his hand, and the old desires proved too strong for him. He therefore relieved her of certain useful marine stores, at the same time plundering various inhabitants of the island, and then set out on his long journey to India, the theatre of his last recorded activities. For here he fell in with a famous native potentate and pirate, one Angria, who had for many years been an implacable thorn in the side of the East India Company, and who now recognized in Plantain a man of his own heart and a most useful subordinate. Receiving him with the utmost hospitality, he entertained him with such grandeur that Plantain, we are told, "was at a loss how to behave himself." His faculty for making himself at home, however, probably reasserted itself very soon, and the last tidings that were received of him described him as enjoying the highest favour of

this powerful Indian potentate, who had made him the admiral of his fleet.

Thus a remarkable man passed out of history to what ultimate fate we do not know, but leaving behind him a record that, apart from its brutality, revealed a force of character and native genius that might have won for him, in another sphere, a proud place in English history.

CHAPTER XII

CAPTAIN GOW OF THE ORKNEYS

HITHERTO in considering the reign of the eighteenth century pirates it is to the outer seas that their adventures have taken us. In the West Atlantic, with its half-settled tropical islands, with its long coast-line dotted with struggling settlements separated by huge areas of still untamed wilderness; along the west coast of Africa, with its tiny trading centres or "forts"; and in the Indian Ocean —these were the natural haunts of the privateers men thrown out of employment at the end of the long wars with France. Here were rich trading-vessels far from home and but scantily protected by naval power. Here were innumerable natural harbours remote from the interference of the law. And here also were isolated communities far from civilization, providing a ready and not too inquisitive market for cheaply acquired goods. In the last of our characters, however, John Gow, we come upon a pirate in home waters, and a crew of boys, for most of them were but little more than this, who made the Channel, the Mediterranean, and the coast of Scotland the scene of their exploits. Indeed, their story is rather that of a single raid than a definite pirate career, but Gow is an interesting figure in that he was probably the original of Sir Walter Scott's "Pirate," as well, possibly, as of Defoe's "Captain Singleton."

Born at Wick in Caithness somewhere about 1697, he was the son of a respectable Scottish merchant and his wife, and his early life seems to have been spent chiefly in the Orkney Islands. Very little is known of this, however, and it is at the age of twenty-seven as bo'sun of an English vessel homeward bound from Lisbon that he first figured as the ringleader in an unsuccessful plot to capture the ship upon which he was employed. By this time, of course, and even in the more distant seas where effective policing was infinitely harder, most of the more famous pirates had already run their course and come to their appointed ends. In Ocracoke inlet on the Virginian coast the black-visaged Teach had died fighting. The tarred corpses of Bartholomew Roberts' companions were still probably swinging in chains at Cape Coast Castle. England was begging for food, if he had not already died, upon the shores of Madagascar. Bonnet and Rackam, Vane and Davis, and a dozen others had met their fate, and to all intents and purposes the reign of the pirates was already becoming a thing of the past. The enterprise of Gow must therefore either have argued a complete ignorance of the real factors of the situation, a totally unbalanced judgment, or a passion for wild and unlawful adventure that shouldered all other considerations aside.

As we have said, however, his first effort was a failure, but by the time the details of his plot had become known, Gow himself was out of the country on his way to Holland. Here in August, 1724, he signed on as an ordinary seaman in a Guernsey vessel lying in the river Texel, which was bound for Santa Cruz to take a cargo of leather, cloth, and beeswax to Genoa in Italy. Her captain was of French extraction, one Captain Oliver Ferneau,

and owing to the fact that Holland and Turkey were then at war, it was found convenient by the Amsterdam shippers to employ a foreign crew. Of the twenty-three hands, therefore, the majority were British, and during the voyage to Santa Cruz, Gow so pleased Ferneau that the latter made him his second mate, an office he combined with that of gunner. Eventually to be known as the *George Galley*, it seems probable, though not certain, that when she left Amsterdam this 200-ton Guernseyman was sailing under the name of the *Caroline*, and after an uneventful voyage she arrived safely at her first port of destination. She remained there for two months, taking in her cargo, and it was during this time that Gow laid his plans to make himself her master. In this his chief confederates were two fellow Scotsmen, William Melvin and Dan Macaulay, aged respectively seventeen and twenty, an Irish boy of sixteen named Michael Moore, a Welshman, John Williams, a young Dane, John Peterson, and a couple of Swedes, John Winter and Peter Rollson; and just as the vessel sailed, Gow succeeded in manufacturing a plausible grievance as the first step of his active campaign. Ferneau was annoyed, but behaved with considerable discretion, so that the vessel put to sea with an ostensibly contented crew, but with signs of impending trouble, which he observed and which he confided to his first mate.

After discussing the matter they decided it would be well to have their firearms handy, but unfortunately for them their conversation was overheard by one of the conspirators, while by the irony of fate it was Gow, the unsuspected plotter in the background, to whom as chief gunner the captain's orders would have come. Hurriedly, in view of this, the conspirators consulted, and since by the

next morning the captain's party would be well armed, it was decided that it was a case of now or never, and they resolved to make their attack that night. All was apparently peaceful, however, when at eight o'clock the crew, according to custom, marshalled for prayers in the chief cabin, and a couple of hours later, in the November darkness, the captain was alone on the quarter-deck. Down below, the first mate, the surgeon, and the supercargo were all asleep in their hammocks, as were those members of the crew who were not on duty or had not been informed of what was on foot. For Gow's purposes it was the ideal moment. A solitary binnacle light glimmered on the deck. And when, at a given signal, the murdering began, Captain Ferneau was quickly overpowered. Wheeling round at the muffled sound of a shot, he was seized and pinioned by Winter, Melvin and Rollston, and after a fierce struggle, in which he was stabbed and finally twice shot by Gow, he was thrown overboard.

Meanwhile, down below, the mate, surgeon, and supercargo had all been similarly put to death, the mate being shot by the boy Michael Moore under the orders of Williams, who was destined to be Gow's chief officer. With the exception of one Belbin, who readily joined them, the rest of the crew were imprisoned for the night in the great cabin, and the next morning were told that if they accepted the new régime and did their duty willingly no harm would befall them. The ship was then christened the *Revenge*, and in addition to the twelve guns which she already mounted, six more were brought up from the hold, giving her an effective armament of eighteen guns. Her course was set for the coast of Spain, and her career as a pirate had begun.

Her first prize was an English vessel, the *Delight* of Poole, on her way to Cadiz from Newfoundland with a cargo of fish; and this ship was eventually sunk, her captain, Thomas Wise, and crew of five being put in chains on board the *Revenge*. She was not much of a capture, nor was her successor, a Scottish vessel, the *Sarah*, under the command of Captain Somerville, bound for Genoa, and also disappointingly laden with fish, the chief desire of the pirates being for a fresh supply of wine and liquor. After being plundered she too was despatched to the bottom, a couple of her men agreeing to sail under Gow; one of them was the carpenter, John Menzies, and the other an apprentice of eighteen, Alexander Robb—the latter being placed in charge of his late skipper and fellow crew, who were imprisoned in the *Revenge's* powder room.

So far Gow's venture had not been particularly successful, and soon afterwards a French vessel eluded him, evidently being suspicious of the *Revenge's* appearance and giving her a fruitless three days' chase. Moreover, his water supply was now beginning to run low, and Gow therefore decided to make for Madeira, the nearest land to him, where he sent an armed boat's crew into the harbour, giving them discretion to obtain what they could in any way that seemed most promising. Once again, however, the *Revenge* and her representatives failed to convince her observers, and Gow was obliged to leave the island as poor as he came, heading next for the little island of Porto Santo, where he hoisted the British colours and sent his respects and a present to the governor. The latter was highly gratified, at once giving him the desired permission to purchase supplies and take in water, and even paid a personal visit to

the *Revenge*, where Gow received him with equal courtesy. But there was some delay in respect of the arrival of provisions, and Gow decided to make use of the governor's presence, informing him that he must remain a prisoner until the *Revenge's* requirements had been fully satisfied. This was satisfactorily accomplished upon the following morning, when the governor was given a further present, and departed ashore amid mutual protestations of respect and with a formal salute of guns.

Fully equipped with arms and ammunition, and reasonably well supplied with victuals, Gow now headed his ship towards Cape St. Vincent and next took an American merchantman bound for Lisbon. Like her predecessors, however, she proved a poor bargain, the bulk of her cargo being timber, and all that the pirates secured from her was some bread and some barrels of beef and pork. This was on December 18th, and Gow took the opportunity of unloading into her Captain Wise and her crew with the exception of a little cabin boy whom he retained. The American skipper, Captain Cross, he kept aboard the *Revenge*, forcibly recruiting some of his hands. Then, nine days later, he made a capture of rather more value in the shape of a French vessel, the *Lewis Joseph*, with a cargo of wine, fruit and oil, to say nothing of several guns and a good supply of fire-arms and ammunition. Her master and crew of eleven were taken on board the *Revenge*, while the two imprisoned skippers, Cross and Somerville, together with such of their men as had not been forced to join the pirates, were placed—each with a small present!—upon the *Lewis Joseph* and sent on their way.

Gow had now taken four vessels, and his next encounter was with a large Frenchman in the

neighbourhood of Cape Finisterre, and this led to a contretemps with his chief officer Williams that very nearly had a fatal issue. For Williams had already cleared the *Revenge* for action when, on drawing nearer to the Frenchman, it was discovered that she was a vessel of thirty-two guns with a crew of at least a hundred. Gow at once pointed out that it would be folly to attack her, whereupon Williams accused him of cowardice, and finally, after a heated controversy in which Gow kept full control of himself, Williams drew his pistol and fired at his captain point blank. The pistol did not however go off, and at the same moment Winter and Peterson both fired at Williams, wounding him in the arm and stomach, while others of the crew at once seized him. In spite of his wounds, however, he broke free from them, and running towards the powder room threatened to blow up the ship, being again seized and disarmed just in time. Gow had now every excuse to make short shrift of his lieutenant, and most of the crew were anxious to throw him overboard—a fate that he himself had several times repeatedly urged as the proper portion for the other prisoners. But Gow decided instead to keep him in irons and hand him over to the next vessel that they captured, with orders that he was then to be delivered as a pirate to the first man-of-war encountered. Williams had not long to wait, for on January 6th Gow took a Bristol vessel, the *Triumvirate*, which was destined to be the last of his prizes as a pirate on the high seas. Nor was she much more to boast of than the others had been, and all that she yielded to Gow was a boat and some tackle, some rum and brandy, a watch, a few spoons, and a silver cup. But she was a convenient receptacle for all his remaining prisoners, including the wounded mate, and these

were afterwards handed over by the captain of the *Triumvirate* to H.M.S. *Argyle*, whom he met at Lisbon.

But it was now clear, at any rate to Gow himself, that news of his proceedings would soon be public property, and that if he did not very speedily seek another theatre of operation, he would be having a man-of-war upon his own heels. He therefore called his crew together and put the position before them, discussing the various alternatives with which they were faced. The traditional pirate grounds of the Gulf of Guinea, the West Indies, and the coast of North America, were all canvassed, but it was decided that the *Revenge* was not sufficiently equipped for a long-distance voyage with possible hard fighting. But Gow had already formed a plan, which he put before his men, for making his way to the Orkney Islands, where, as he shrewdly said, they would hardly be searched for, and where he knew various houses near the coast that might easily be plundered. The majority of his men agreed, and having altered the vessel's name to the *George Galley*, Gow arrived off Stromness harbour in the middle of January, 1725.

Here the pirates had agreed to represent themselves to the inhabitants of the little town as bound from Cadiz to Stockholm, but prevented by adverse weather from passing the Sound, and as having decided therefore to put into Stromness to refit and take in water and provisions. Two or three other vessels were also in the harbour, and with these Gow, under the name of Smith, began to do a strictly legitimate trade, his crew being bound under penalty of death to maintain the story that had been agreed upon. He also liberally entertained, and was entertained by, the leading men of the town,

and there is even a legend that he won the affections of the daughter of one of the most prominent of these.

But Fate was now beginning to close upon him, and upon the shrewd mind of these northern observers it began to dawn that there was something a little strange about this dashing young captain and his prosperous and undisciplined crew. By an extraordinary chance, too, there happened to be lying in this remote harbour a vessel called the *Margaret*, whose skipper, Captain Andrew Watt, had known the *Caroline* at Amsterdam, a ship indeed to which two of his own apprentices had deserted. The *George Galley* had therefore seemed familiar to him, but had not particularly aroused his suspicions until he heard one day that his erstwhile apprentices, Macaulay and Jamieson, had been seen ashore. That decided Captain Watt to put aboard her, where he had an interview with Gow, who refused to part with the boys, but was unable to prevent Captain Watt from making a very careful scrutiny of his surroundings. This more than confirmed him in his belief that all had not gone well with the former *Caroline*, and that the *George Galley* was something very different from the peaceful merchantman that she professed to be. But a few days later he had definite evidence from the boy Jamieson, who came to him while ashore and made a full confession of all that had happened since the vessel left Santa Cruz. Watt then tried to persuade Jamieson to desert at once, but the lad was afraid that, if he did so, his fellow pirates would destroy the *Margaret*, and he also had hopes of a general break-away on the part of a majority of the crew who were discontented, he said, and were hoping to get command of the vessel. This they did not succeed in doing, although about a dozen

of them made their escape in the ship's long-boat and succeeded in reaching the mainland of Scotland near Duncansby Head.

Meanwhile, about the same time, another of the crew, Robert Read, finding himself ashore, decided to bolt for it and made for the hills. Here he took refuge in an outlying farm, and borrowing a horse from the farmer, made his way to Kirkwall, where he gave full details to the authorities. Captain Watt also, who had just sailed in the *Margaret*, had laid information before leaving, while certain minor robberies and the mysterious disappearance of one or two likely local lads had now thoroughly alarmed the neighbourhood and especially the local lairds who had been Gow's objective. Moreover, by yet another unhappy chance for Gow, there had just arrived at Stranraer the French vessel in which he had placed the two plundered captains, Cross and Somerville. Of this Gow was ignorant, but it was sufficiently clear to him that the vanished members of his crew would not be long in getting him into trouble, and having cajoled or pressed into his service an adequate number of substitutes he resolved to leave Stromness at once.

This was on the 10th of February when his refitting was only half accomplished, and it is pleasant to record that just before he sailed, young Jamieson succeeded in escaping, disguised in women's clothes, together with the little cabin boy who had been forcibly retained after the capture of the *Delight* of Poole. On the same night, before he finally put to sea, Gow sent an armed force to attack the house of one of the local gentry, a Mr. Honeyman, who lived on the eastern coast of the Bay some two miles distant. This gentleman was High Sheriff of Orkney and was away from home, probably in connection with the affairs of Gow

himself; and Mrs. Honeyman and her daughter together with the servants, were left to deal with the attack.

With great presence of mind Mrs. Honeyman, at the first alarm, succeeded in emptying her husband's money-chest of most of its treasure, and bluffed her way past the sentinel with the bags of gold concealed about her person. Meanwhile, the daughter, as quick-witted as her mother, had bolted upstairs and secured the most important of her father's documents, tying them up in a cloth and throwing them out of the window—afterwards escaping herself by the same route. All that Gow seems to have obtained, therefore, was a few spoons and about seven pounds in gold, although tradition asserts that the pirates returned to their boats to the triumphant accompaniment of bagpipes and with three abducted servant maids.

Such was the end of his Stromness visit, and sailing at once on the return of the raiding party, he arrived three days later off the little island of Eday, having taken in water and landed his female captives at another small island en route. But Eday, as it turned out, was to be the scene of his doom, for in spite of having entrusted himself to a local pilot, the *George Galley* ran ashore, and but for her anchors, would quickly have been broken up. Even as it was, she was in a dangerous plight, since the stolen long-boat was not available for towing purposes, while the inhabitants of the island, of whom the chief proprietor was James Fea, had already received warning of what they might expect. Moreover, James Fea was a man of great subtlety and resource, and as soon as it became clear from observation, as well as from messengers despatched by Gow in his little remaining yawl, that the *George Galley* was in trouble, he

had his own big boat dismounted, and the oars of all the smaller ones hidden away.

Meanwhile he sent a tactful letter back to Gow by the hands of one Laing, a relative of his and a local merchant, who returned from the pirate bearing the offer of a substantial reward in return for Fea's assistance in floating his vessel. To this Fea made no definite reply, but placed six men—all that the little island could muster—at various points of observation. Later in the evening, the yawl again put ashore from the *George Galley*, under the command of Belbin, William's successor, and with her crew of five men armed to the teeth. Fea, who was himself unarmed, then took one or two of his men with him to meet them, and with the rest of his force concealed in the neighbourhood, warmly protested against the evidence of hostility with which Belbin and his fellows had landed. To this they replied that they meant to have a boat, if not by fair means then by foul. But in the matter of diplomacy they had found in Fea one who was much more than their master.

Pointing out to them how awkwardly he was placed, with all the other Orkney gentry in arms against Gow, he suggested a conference in a neighbouring inn as to the best method of procedure. Belbin agreed to this, and with his followers accompanied Fea to the house in question, Fea having taken the opportunity of ordering one of his men to summon him, in about a quarter of an hour's time, to the side of his wife, who was at that time ill. The call duly came, and excusing himself, Fea rapidly completed his plans. It was now dark, and arranging an ambush about half-way between his house and the inn, he presently returned and invited Belbin to accept his hospitality while he was making what arrangements he could to meet Gow's demand.

Again Belbin agreed, probably the more inclined thereto by the liquor with which he and his comrades had been plied, though he took the precaution of first attending to the loading of his pistols. A few minutes later, however, he was promptly and effectively overpowered, his four companions being similarly rushed as they sat drinking in the inn.

The *George Galley* was now boatless. Express messengers had been sent by Fea to Kirkwall for reinforcements, and beacons of alarm had been lit on the island hill-tops. Moreover, a strong wind was blowing, the seas were running high, and Gow must have realized that he was now in an extremely tight corner. Towards evening, however, on the next day, Sunday, the wind shifted, giving the *George Galley* a chance had her anchor-cable been cut at the right moment. But unfortunately for Gow, it was severed just as the *George's* bow was swinging towards the shore, and in a couple of minutes she was faster than ever upon the small island, known as the Calf of Eday, about three-quarters of a mile from the main island. Then at last Gow saw that his case was hopeless and hoisted a white flag, whereupon Fea came down to the shore and opened negotiations through a speaking trumpet. As a result of these, Gow agreed to an interview, and Fea accordingly sent a cousin of his, accompanied by five armed men, across the channel to the opposite island. Before doing so, however, he took the precaution of placing observers on the roof of his house who were to signal to the landing party if any armed men left the stranded vessel.

It was a wise precaution, for just as Gow's proxy—he had decided at the last minute not to come himself—approached Fea's cousin and his men, the observers on Eday saw a body of armed

pirates rapidly hurrying to the scene of conference. They at once signalled, whereupon the islanders retreated to their boat, the proxy afterwards denying that he had had any knowledge of the treachery that had thus been foiled. The pirates being recalled, Fea's cousin then agreed to send a hostage on board the *George* in return for the presence of Gow himself. Gow therefore came in person, but Fea, who had been watching events from the opposite shore, and who had not authorized the delivery of a hostage, at once put across with some of the recruits that had now reached him, and succeeded in obtaining the return of the hostage. He then arrested Gow—an act for which he was subsequently criticized—and further succeeded in persuading Gow to send for some of his men, whom he also made prisoners. He took them all back with him to Eday, where he placed them under a strong guard, and soon afterwards, realizing that their sorry game was up, the remainder of the *George's* crew surrendered.

Later they were transported to London for trial, where they found Williams awaiting them, and in the following June, Gow himself, together with Macaulay, Melvin, Peterson, Rollson, Winter, Robb, Belbin and Williams paid the due penalty at Wapping. The story of their adventures and trial had created enormous public interest, and the gallows, which had been erected at the low water-mark, according to custom, was surrounded by a huge crowd, the ships in the river being similarly thronged with eager spectators. Indeed, so great was the anxiety to see the last of the pirates that several lives, we are told, were lost both in the water and on shore—a sordid enough ending to one of the most pitiful and least romantic of pirate enterprises.

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Hurd, Archibald Spicer

The reign of the pirates.

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